TOTAL SEM, DON'T HIDE 'EM CLASS SICS May/June 2018

Z-STRIPE DUGATI

1972 750 SPORT: DUCATI'S FIRST TRUE SPORTING TWIN





PLUS:

- BRITISH AMERICAN: 1979 TRIUMPH T140D BONNEVILLE SPECIAL
- ART DECO ON WHEELS: 1930 MAJESTIC
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The actual prototype Vincent Black Lightning ridden by Rollie Free in 1948 across the Bonneville Salt Flats to a record 150.313mph is now on display at the National Motorcycle Museum in Anamosa, Iowa. Currently a part of the Museum's Streamliners exhibition, it will be on display until the end of June. Attend the Vintage Rally 2018 on June 23 and head inside to see the bike in person! Go to MotorcycleClassics.com/Rollie to see more.



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BLACK SIDE

Back in the shop

Riding-wise, 2017 was something of a disappointment for me. A combination of too many non-motorcycle responsibilities combined with bikes that seemed to be in a constant state of disassembly kept me off the road more than I would have liked. This year, I'm dead set on getting in some serious miles.

That's easier said than done, unfortunately, because I still have too many bikes in pieces. The 1983 Laverda RGS is slowly coming together, with the unfortunate emphasis on *slowly*. The engine's in one piece again after a comprehensive top-end overhaul, but while the engine was out I decided to refinish the frame. After almost 35 years on the road, the original black paint was in bad shape, and if I was going to do anything about the paint it meant welding in extra frame gussets around the head stock. Why? Well, about the same time the original Laverda company in Breganze, Italy, went out of business, it issued a service bulletin warning RGS and SFC1000 owners of potential frame cracking around the head stock, supplying a set of drawings showing where to weld in suggested strengthening gussets.

A thorough examination showed no signs of cracking on my frame (anecdotal evidence suggests the problem was a bigger issue in Europe, where riders tended to hammer their bikes at high speeds on the Autostrada), but that didn't mean it couldn't happen. So, the gussets are in, the frame's been sandblasted and resprayed, and now it's waiting for me to slot the engine back in so I can start the process of reassembly, which, I'm hoping, should go fairly quickly. The hydraulics have already been rebuilt, the front suspension got a thorough rebuild and Race Tech upgrade a few years back, the rear shocks are new from Race Tech, and the bodywork is still in excellent shape.

Meanwhile, I've been working on getting the 1974 Laverda 750 SF twin I pushed into the garage last spring up to snuff. Somewhat predictably, it's been a slower process than hoped. A solid-running machine, it's not getting a full restoration, more like a sympathetic recommissioning. But given my lack of experience with the model — as in none — it's taking me a little extra time to work through seemingly straightforward operations like replacing the throttle and choke cables, which need to be routed pretty precisely to work without binding. I've gone through the carburetors, adjusted the valves, replaced the steering and wheel bearings, and disassembled and checked the front forks and rear swingarm. It's all going back together nicely, but I won't fire it up again until the electronic ignition I ordered arrives. The stock Bosch ignition points are long out of production, and with replacements now going for around \$50 a pop — \$100 a pair before adding in another \$50 in condensers — going electronic seems like a no-brainer.

That leaves my 1973 BMW R75/5, which is waiting for me to finish recovering the seat. The pan's been stripped and painted, the new seat cover is draped over the original foam (thankfully still in good shape) waiting to be stretched in place, and the new trim that goes around the lower edge of the seat is on the shelf. "All" I need now is a little more time, which, as usual, is the biggest stumbling block. But, I'm nothing if not optimistic, and I'm fairly confident (note the hedge; "fairly"

confident) I'll get to ride the RGS to Wisconsin this June for the annual Rockerbox show at Road America. Which, of course, is the whole point of all this labor: riding. If things go as planned I'll also ride to Mid-Ohio for Vintage Motorcycle

Days and, with luck, to Pennsylvania for our third annual Motorcycle Classics Getaway at Seven Springs Resort.

See you on the road — I hope!

Richard Backus Editor-in-chief

Motorcycle.

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READERS AND

"While gone, the bike is not forgotten."

More green BMWs

I don't know where my friend Ken Week's green BMW R75/5 is now, but he rode it until '77 or '78; it was the first BMW I ever rode. That's me on the left 42 years ago before I quit my job and rode from Salem, Oregon, to Key West, Florida, largely at Ken's urging. I bought my bike, an R60, from Reid, the guy in stripes who had to have an R90S, which he put a Windjammer on.

Ken and Reid were known for long day excursions, often 500-plus miles, on these bikes. I hope all the green /5's come out of the woodwork now.

Ben Beckley/Sisters, Oregon

Best letter ever

I wish you could have seen the huge smile on my face as I was flipping through your last issue and came to "The Future Motorcycle" article on the Honda Nighthawk (Motorcycle Classics, January/February 2018). To me, it's a time machine! I purchased my bright red 1985 Nighthawk in the summer of 2002, shortly after my 22nd birthday. If any of us can remember that far back, 2002 was a time when you could still get UJMs for a song. The bike sat neglected in the corner of a Honda car dealership, covered in dust. I funneled \$600 of my GI Bill college tuition reimbursement money to the dealer, and rode it the six blocks back to my apartment. I don't think a day went by that summer when I wasn't cruising main street and county roads on that bike.



From left: Ben Beckley, Reid, Ken Week and baby son Keith, and Rob, circa 1976.

True to form, the bike suffered from the alternator issue mentioned in the article. There was many a cold morning I would have to push start the 'Hawk down the driveway of my girlfriend's home to get it fired up, dropping it into first gear and riding off in a spray of gravel. Being young and dumb, the girlfriend went away and shortly after, the Nighthawk did too.

I sold the bike right before I left for a yearlong deployment to Kosovo with the Minnesota National Guard. Before doing so, I spent plenty of evenings riding around the lake country, taking in the sights and smells of a home I was about to leave. The Nighthawk was a big part

While gone, the bike is not forgotten. It instilled in me a passion for motorcycles and as soon as I got back from my deployment I purchased a 2002 Triumph Bonneville America. I fell in love with that bike too, and swore I would never part with it like I had foolishly done with the Nighthawk. I've ridden that Triumph all over the country and 14 years and 80,000 miles later, it is still here with me. It is joined by a group of classics all originally sold before I was born; a 1972 Honda CB450, a 1973 Honda CB750, a 1976 Yamaha IT400, a 1977 Yamaha XS650 as well as a revolving cast of new motorcycles I get to bring home to familiarize myself with, courtesy of my



Scott Mercer's gorgeous R90S (left) and R100RS Motorsport.

Rider: Scott Mercer, Beaver, Pennsylvania

Occupation: Marriage and family services

Current rides: 1976 BMW R90S, 1978 BMW R100RS, 2007

Kawasaki ZX-14

Scott's story: "As the owner of a 1976 BMW R90S, I had the privilege of attending a wonderful 40th anniversary celebration of the model in 2014 in eastern Pennsylvania. It was so successful that immediately a plan was hatched by the event organizers to hold another 40th anniversary event for the R100RS in three years' time. The man responsible for the design, Hans Muth, was at the R90S celebration and enjoyed it so much he committed to attending the next one in 2017. At the time I didn't own an RS, but upon my return home I set about remedying that situation. I reached out to the gang on the R90S Worldnet and expressed an



employer, Indian Motorcycles. All of this because of an unassuming 650cc. shaft drive Honda. Not bad. My garage is pretty packed, but I think there might just be room for one more old bike. I always did like that shaft drive

Daniel Born/Northfield, Minnesota

Another Nighthawk fan

I enjoyed your article on the Honda Nighthawk. I was fortunate to purchase, a few years ago, a meticulously maintained '85 from the original owner that I rode for a couple of years. As the article states, it is a very reliable and trouble-free machine. Dave was wise to change the jets as they are pretty cold-blooded, taking several minutes to warm up. I wish I had thought of that. One thing I found that dramatically improves handling is to drop the triple clamps about 3/4 inch.

Steven Boggs/Des Moines, Iowa

MV Agusta 600 Four

Great story on the 1967 MV Agusta 600 (Motorcycle Classics, January/February 2018). However, there is one major flaw: The document at the bottom of Page 52 is not a Bill of Sale. It is the equivalent of the Manufacturers Certificate of Origin, which is the first page of the Libretto (Log book) that describes the vehicle as a Motociclo (motorcycle), which is why the Motocarrozzetta ("motocar") is crossed out. The pink number in the upper right side is

And more green BMWs

Your featured metallic green BMW R75/5 followed by Mike Taint's letter and photo of his bike stirred my interest. I finished restoring my own R75/5 in the same color a couple of years ago (see picture) and my buddy in Las Vegas, Dave Kosinski, has restored one also. So they may not be as rare as you might think. Perfect for that St. Patrick's Day ride.

Bob Andren/via email

the Taraa (license plate number). It looks like VA 100201. The VA is for Varese, which is the region where the MV Agusta factory was. Today that same area on the edge of Malpense Airport is the location of the Museo Agusta.

Burt Richmond/Chicago, Illinois

Burt

Thanks for putting us straight, those kinds of details are great to know. — Ed.

Great bike stories

I just wanted to say thanks for your great work. I will soon be 55, and since the age of 10 I have been a part-time rider of mostly dirt machines. The technical details in your pieces are great, and without too much fluff. as compared to other publications. Rocky L./Scottsdale. Arizona

Scooters

I believe I've been subscribing since your first issue and have saved all issues (except maybe one or two which were loaned out and haven't returned). Motorcycle Classics remains a high quality publication that I look forward to getting each month ... well, every other month! Over the years, however, I've changed a bit: I'm now content riding scooters. I have a newish 2014 Honda Forza and an oldish 1985 Honda Elite 250. So, how about including some classic scooters in Motorcucle Classics? There are certainly

some out there!

Steve Parsons/Washington, Illinois

AJS E90

The magazine keeps getting better great job! Alan Cathcart is always on the money except a bore and stroke of 54mm x 54.5mm gets you 125cc. Must have gotten the V-4 specification by mistake. Thanks for another terrific article.

Thomas Marauardt/via email

Thomas

You're right. It should be 68mm x 68.5mm, I think! — Ed.

interest in obtaining a 50,000-mile or less R100RS and asked if anyone out there knew where I could find one. I had my answer in less than a day. It seems there was this fellow who had a lowmileage RS for sale. He saw my plea and responded.

"Over the next several weeks a flurry of emails ensued. The bike was last registered in the late 1980s and hadn't been run in over 25 years. He had the original title in hand. It was started the previous year and ran acceptably before being winterized, but would need a thorough sorting. I was intrigued and asked for a little more information and a few pictures.

"What I got back had my jaw on the floor in a heartbeat: A 1978 R100RS Motorsport with only 17,566 original miles. I couldn't believe it was a Motorsport as only 200 of them were 'officially' imported into the United States as a limited edition model. I asked him if it was a repaint and he assured me it was original. I asked for the VIN number, and it fit in the Motorsport/ R100RS production series in 1978. The pictures were gorgeous.

"His asking price was less than the bike originally sold for! I wondered if this was too good to be true. Let's just say my timing is typically never so fortunate. I quickly attempted due diligence, but felt compelled to act and was told by other knowledgeable owners that, for the price, I needed to act quickly. Within the week I made an appointment to see it, deposit money in hand, unbeknownst to the owner. It was as described and photographed. Needless to say it is now taking up residence next to my 1976 R90S.

"Once in my possession I promptly took it to a BMW master mechanic and he performed the necessary maintenance and refurbishing to make her first-class roadworthy. I took her to the BMWMOA National Rally in 2016, where she took third place in the people's popular choice awards. I also took the Motorsport to the 40th anniversary R100RS rally in eastern Pennsylvania last summer. What a privilege for me to be a steward of such a fine piece of machinery! It is a treasure that will no doubt outlast me."

RADAR

Fire Road Flyer: 1971-1979 Suzuki TS400 Apache

Until the late 1960s, the typical "dual-sport" machine was a street bike wearing parts that made minimal concessions to off-highway riding and were chiefly cosmetic. The 1968 Yamaha DT-1 changed all that. Suddenly, Triumph TR6Cs, Honda CL350s and BSA Victors looked heavy, clunky and stodgy — which they were by comparison. It didn't take long for the other Japanese manufacturers — especially Suzuki — to catch on. With six world motocross championships in four years from 1970-1973 with Joel Robert and Roger De Coster, Suzuki emphatically demonstrated the company's dirt-bike chops, and successfully translated the technology into their over-the-counter scramblers and dual-sport bikes.

Top of the 1971 dual-sport range was the TS400J, a street/dirt bike based on the TM400 customer motocrosser. It featured a 396cc single-cylinder, air-cooled 2-stroke engine with conventional piston porting, like the TM, but with a heavier flywheel, milder port tuning and smaller 32mm Mikuni carburetor. Straight-cut gears drove the 14-plate wet clutch and 5-speed transmission. Ignition was electronic, and lubrication was by Suzuki's Crankcase Cylinder Injection (CCI) system. The single downtube steel tube frame carried a non-adjustable telescopic fork at the front and a swingarm and dual shocks at the rear. The tires were 3.25 x 19 inches at the front and 4 x 18 inches at the back. (The TM used a 3 x 21-inch front.) The addition of battery and full lighting equipment, a swap from alloy wheel rims to steel, and a steering damper contributed to the TS400's extra 47 pounds over the TM.

The result was a bike that "works surprisingly well" on the street, Cycle World said. "On mountain roads, fast bends are a breeze and a good pace can be maintained ... the Apache can be ridden quickly and for a considerable distance to a rider's favorite set of fire roads," CW's testers said, though noting that vibration "becomes a little heavy around 5,000rpm." CW also liked the flexible plastic fenders, washable air filter and simple maintenance



schedule (refilling the oil tank daily). Other than that, oil the cables periodically and adjust the rear chain often.

It was offroad riding where the Apache almost literally fell down. "Suzuki engineers turned a relatively light, overpowered 400MX into an overweight front-heavy sled," CW said. Though testers liked the broad powerband, slick-shifting transmission, ingear kickstart with automatic decompressor (for quick restarting after a stall), and good brakes, a number of factors conspired to make the Apache a handful in the woods. The smaller front wheel would "wash out" easily in turns and plowed into sand; a shorter fork meant less travel than the TM and a more forward weight bias; and soft, lightly damped rear shocks meant the rear wheel getting airborne too easily, leading to front-wheel landings, "one of the worst situations an off-roader faces," CW said.

Cycle magazine liked the TS400J better, in spite of some minor electrical issues: "It's a phenomenal street bike if your vibration threshold is high. It's a good enough dirt bike that ... we'd enter the 500-mile Greenhorn Enduro ... all you could want is better suspension."

For 1975, Suzuki announced the Apache TS400L, with a new dual downtube frame (still with the same geometry of the J), a



ON THE MARKET

1974 Suzuki TS400L/Sold for \$2,200

Trolling the internet turned up quite a few examples of Suzuki's big 400cc 2-stroke dirt bike, with offered examples ranging from parts bikes to near perfect survivors. Prices were all over the place — a low-mileage "survivor" was offered for \$5,000 — but solid, nicely presenting bikes seemed to be trending in the \$1,750-\$2,750 range. The bike shown sold at Mecum Auctions' 2018 Las Vegas sale for \$2,200, right in the middle of the range we found. Said to be in good, original condition, the Mecum bike had 8,117 miles on the odometer and was wearing its original paint and decals. The original exhaust system looked to be in excellent condition — always a plus as original replacements are hard to find — as was the seat and the rest of the cycle parts. That said, the turn signals were missing (originals and repros are still readily available), and the bike sported what looked like a factory rear rack. Maybe not cheap, but probably a solid value for a good bike in a category that seems primed to rise in value.

"Was the TS400L an early victim of EPA-itis?"

SUZUKI TS400 APACHE

taller 3 x 21-inch front wheel, and a revised engine with helical-gear primary. Cycle's tester noted: "Changes to the intake to reduce noise seem to have adversely affected power delivery." The engine "refused to run smoothly under steady throttle at any speed ... a mismatch of carburetion, port timing and exhaust." Was the TS400L an early victim of EPA-itis?

Noting that the new frame carried

the engine much higher, the tester was not too impressed with the TS400L's handling, on-road or off. "With the rise of the

1971-1979 Years produced Power 34hp @ 6,000rpm (claimed) Top speed 81mph (period test) 396cc air-cooled piston-port Engine 2-stroke single 5-speed, chain final drive Transmission Weight (wet)/MPG 292lb (TS400J), 313lb (TS400L)/ 44mpg (TS400J), 23-25mpg (TS400L)

\$952 (1972 ,TS400J); \$1,220

(1975, TS400L)/\$1,000-\$2,500

made the TS400L a mediocre street machine as well as an unacceptable dirt bike. In the process we lost an old friend " MC

engine comes increased foot peg and saddle heights, which lessen stability at cross-country speeds." And in Cycle Guide's dual-sport shootout, "The TS400 had more jetting problems than we had time for ... the Suzuki not only got the worst mileage (as little as 60 miles to a tank), but it never realized its full power potential." Summed up Cycle: "[Suzuki] ...

Alternatives to Suzuki's big-bore 2-stroke offroader

Price then/now

1975-1979 Yamaha DT400

A direct descendent of the DT-1, the 1975 DT400B grew from the 351cc RT-1 and DT360A ("the best all-round big-bore dirt bike in town," according to Cycle). With a 5mm bore increase for 397cc, "The DT400B is notably better," they said in November 1974, calling the DT400's mill "the best enduro engine regardless of displacement from the Orient."

Like the DT360, the 400 used a reed-valve intake, but had a larger carburetor and new radial-fin cylinder head, eliminating the mid-range detonation that Cycle magazine experienced with the 360. In spite of an automatic decompressor, Cycle found the 400 difficult to start, though Cycle World perfected the technique: two or three kicks through with the ignition off, then one with the ignition on usually got it going.

CW found the suspension gave a harsh ride on rough ground, where fork action deteriorated significantly. "As long as you don't require the suspension to react too fast or too often, it works just fine." Summing up, said CW, "As a play bike that can be ridden on the street, it is a good buy. It is just as heavy and handles no better than its competition, but it does have an engine with the

best possible power characteristics ... that lifts the total



1970-1975 Kawasaki F5 Bighorn 350

Unique in its class, the Kawasaki F5 offered a front fork that was adjustable for spring preload, height and trail — the Hatta fork legs could be rotated, offering three different axle locations; ahead, behind, or along the fork axis, shortening or lengthening the wheelbase 2 inches total. That meant the Bighorn's fork could be tuned for enduro, desert or fire-road riding. "There was not a situation or obstacle that could cause them to top or bottom," Cycle Guide wrote.

Into the F5's dual-cradle frame went a rotary-valve 2-stroke single, with an available "Power-Pak" accessory option giving 45 horsepower, but at the expense of low-rpm torque. "The easy-to-handle low-end power of the stock machine is one of the things Cycle World staffers liked best about the Bighorn," wrote that magazine. That said, the same testers complained about a hard-to-find neutral when stopped with the engine running and false neutrals when shifting under load. Revisions for the 1972 F9 model included revised shifting forks that avoided false neutrals.

The F5 ran on 3 x 21-inch front and 4 x 18-inch rear wheels with alloy rims and fenders. Drum brakes offered "good stopping power," on the street, but were also "controllable" on loose sur-

faces, CW wrote. "We would not hesitate to recommend the F5 to both the novice and the expert, for it will satisfy both," CW concluded.

- 1970-1975
- 33hp @ 6,500rpm (claimed)
- 85mph (period test)
- 346cc air-cooled 2-stroke single
- 5-speed, chain final drive



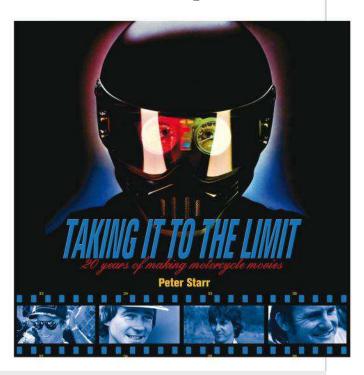
VIEW FROM THE

Taking it to the limit for charity and **Motorcycle Classics** 2018 show updates

Peter Starr takes it to the limit for charity

In 1980, motorcycle filmmaker Peter Starr produced his seminal work, Take it to the Limit. A close, in-depth look at professional motorcycle racing and the riders who were making motion history, the critically acclaimed film featured the greats of the time, from Mike Hailwood blitzing the Isle of Man Mountain Course on a Yamaha TZ750 to Russ Collins charging down the strip trying to break 200mph on his 600 horsepower drag bike, The Sorcerer. That movie, and the 40-plus other motorcycle films Starr made during his career, formed the foundation of his 2009 book and semi-autobiography, Taking it to the Limit — 20 Years of Making Motorcycle Movies.

Fourteen years ago, Starr, now 75, was diagnosed with prostate cancer, an experience that led to his founding the Healing Arts Education Foundation, a 501c3 charity focused on educating prostate cancer sufferers about alternative therapy treatment. The charity is a driving force in Starr's life, and keeping it running requires constant fundraising. To that end, Starr is making 11 copies of a special leather bound edition of Taking it to the Limit — 20 Years of Making Motorcycle Movies available to the first 11 people who make a \$1,000 tax-deductible donation to the Healing Arts Education Foundation. Only 25 were printed, each copy personally autographed by many of the top riders featured in the book, including greats like Kenny Roberts, Eddie Lawson, Freddie Spencer, Bubba Shobert, Jay Springsteen, Malcolm Smith and many more. To donate, contact Peter Starr directly at Peter@starrfilm.com



MC show updates

Our first show dates are coming up fast, kicking off with Vintage Motofest, June 8-10, 2018, at Road America racetrack in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. We'll head up judging for the annual Rockerbox Bike Show at Vintage Motofest, with editor Backus otherwise roaming the circuit in pursuit of great bikes and even better stories. Historic Road America racetrack is an amazing venue, and Vintage Motofest is the perfect start to a summer of great vintage motorcycle events. Get the full schedule of happenings including live music, a microbrew tasting and more at roadamerica.com

Our second Iune event is the Motoblot Urban Motorcycle & Hot Rod Street Rally, June 22-24, 2018. in Chicago. Illinois. An urban street show - as the title suggests — Motoblot has rapidly grown to become Chicago's must-attend motorcycle event of the year. We're looking forward to setting up and helping out with the Vintage Bike Show, and to that end we've managed to convince ice sculpture artist extraordinaire Nate Johnson of Johnson Studios Ice Sculptures, Chicago, to do an on-site, live ice carving demonstration. Nate hasn't yet said exactly what he's going to carve, but you can bet it'll be motorcycle related and, well, cool. Given the street theme, you can expect the bike show to be a pretty relaxed affair, with daily riders and well-preserved originals side by side with perfect restorations. Don't miss it. More info at motoblot.com

Looking forward to July, we're excited to return to the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in Lexington, Ohio, for Vintage Motorcycle Days, July 6-8, 2018. Plans are set for the Motorcycle Classics Ride & Show on Friday, July 6, our first at Mid-Ohio in years and a perfect

way to kick off this incredible weekend of all things vintage motorcycles, including the largest motorcycle swap meet in the U.S., with motorcycles and motorcycle parts spread over a staggering 35 acres adjoining Mid-Ohio. The granddaddy of all vintage motorcycle events, you need to put it on your calendar. Go to MotorcycleClassics. com/events-2018 for more details on our Ride & Show, and go to amavintagemotor cycledays.com for a complete event schedule.



Motive: Most bikes roll in under their own power for Rockerbox.







Story by Hamish Cooper Photos by Phil Aynsley

There is worldwide hype about Ducati's allnew V4 Superbike, which comes on the back of the Panigale R Final Edition, combining the Superleggera engine with the chassis of the homologation-special Panigale R. And while all this exotica is simply mind blowing, what is even more remarkable is that Ducati did something similar decades ago.

Way back in 1972 the Italian company broke equally new ground with the world's first production "no-compromise" V-twin café racer. Sure, Harley-Davidson had its tarmac-tearing Sportster and there were various road burners from Triumph, BSA and Norton. But apart from slow-selling models like Moto Guzzi's V7 Sport, Laverda's SFC and MV's 750S, none came standard with clip-on handlebars and rearset footpegs. Certainly none had racing-style megaphones, or were stripped to the bare minimum to achieve a top speed nudging 130mph.

Enter the 750 Sport

The 750 Sport of 1972, precursor to Ducati's popular 750cc-900cc Super Sport range, opened the door to sporting motorcycles in the mid-1970s. Aimed at the weekend canyon carver, these bikes initially came mainly from Italy and included machines like Moto Guzzi's V7 Sport and Laverda's 750SF. These led to Guzzi's ultimate café racer, the 850cc Le Mans. BMW had the R90S.

Norton brought out the John Player Replica 850 Commando and even Harley-Davidson was impressed and hit back with its 110mph, 1,000cc XLCR café.

> The Japanese manufacturers were upping the ante in the horsepower stakes, but it wasn't until the early 1980s that they sold road versions of race winners, such as the Suzuki GS1000S, styled after Wes Cooley's racer, and the Kawasaki Z1000R, often called the ELR or Eddie Lawson Replica. The closest Japan came to producing anything like Ducati's original 127mph 750 Sport was the Suzuki GSX-R750 of 1985.

Humble beginnings — and a race win

As the Seventies dawned, Ducati needed bigger machines to replace its long-running singles, but for several crucial years factory engineers had been distracted by a range of dead-end prototypes. These included a 500cc Grand Prix V-twin and an outsourced Ricardo water-cooled 350cc inline triple with fuel injection. as well as the stillborn Apollo V4 police motorcycle of the mid-1960s.

What Ducati needed was a strong, relatively uncomplicated big twin cylinder, capable of both road and race duties. The factory head honchos turned to their go-to designer, Fabio Taglioni, who came up

The gauges and headlight are attached to the handlebar, and move within the fairing (right). Owner Achim Gier and his 750 Sport (far right).

with a winner on both fronts. Taglioni used the cylinders and modified valve gear of Ducati's long-running single overhead cam singles in a 90-degree "L-twin" configuration that had the front cylinder almost parallel to the ground. Remarkably, it was just a few months between prototype and production, yet despite being a rushed job the 750 GT was a great sales success.

Of course, with Taglioni involved, a race version soon followed, which achieved instant success with the Paul Smart-Bruno Spaggiari one-two finish at the 1972 Imola 200. Their race bikes were close cousins to the 750 GT, except for having desmodromic cylinder heads instead of the GT's standard overhead camshaft with coil springs.

These desmo racers powered on into the Seventies, eventually being enlarged

to 860cc for events such as Spain's Montjuich 24-hour race. However, in typical convoluted Ducati management decision-making, it took a full two years for the Super Sport "desmo" 750 to be released.

In the meantime, Ducati released a non-desmo 750 Sport in 1972 in limited numbers and the full-scale production version went on sale in 1973. Some Ducati historians believe the valvespring Sport was a wasteful development phase and the factory should have leapfrogged into the desmo Super Sport 750, the direct descendant of Smart's Imola-winner. However, the market-



Engine: 748cc air-cooled OHC 90-degree V-twin, 80mm x 74.4mm bore and stroke, 9.3:1 compres-

sion ratio, 62hp @ 8,200rpm (est.)

Top speed: 130mph (est.)

Carburetion: Two 32mm Dell'Orto PHF Transmission: 5-speed, chain final drive Electrics: 12v, coil and breaker points ignition Frame/wheelbase: Dual downtube steel, engine as

a stressed member/60.2in (1,529mm)

Suspension: 38mm Marzocchi telescopic fork front,

dual Marzocchi shocks w/adjustable preload rear Brakes: 10.8in (274mm) disc front, 7.9in (200mm) SLS drum rear

Tires: 3.25 x 19in front, 3.5 x 18in rear

Weight (dry): 400lb (182kg)

Seat height: 32in (813mm)

Fuel capacity/MPG: 4.5gal (17ltr)/30-35mpg Price then/now: \$2,700/\$25,000-\$45,000



ing focus of motorcycle manufacturers at that time was on big-bore, interstate mile-munchers, not race replicas.

So what significance does the 750 Sport have now? Criticized at the time for its overly long, lean look and too-bright orange-yellow paint, but praised for its light weight and road performance, it's

now a much sought-after classic. And the early versions, nick-named the Z-stripe because of their unique tank decals, are even more desirable.

Man and machine

Achim Gier is a Belgium-based Ducati collector whose passion for the brand began in 1983, with the acquisition of a 10-year-old Ducati 750 GT. Three decades on, he now has a comprehensive collection of bevel twins dating from 1971 to 1985, from 750 to Mille. "Of course, hunting down the rare models became a





passion and I always wanted to own one of the first 750 Sport Ducatis, the Z-stripe yellow version, but it had to be an original one," Achim says. Lost in the maze of replicas on the worldwide market, it took more than 15 years to locate an original one.

Achim explains: "Unfortunately, there are too many replicas on the market. The frame of the Z-stripe Sport has the large rear section of the GT, so a GT frame can easily be modified into a Sport. The fact that the Sport shares the number sequence and homologation (DM750S) with the GT (which also has 750S stamped on the headstock) also makes it difficult to differentiate."

Apart from some details only relevant to the Sport, the number sequence is the key. "Any number outside of the 751000 to 751500 range will not belong to a real 1972 Sport," Achim says. No one knows exactly how many Sports with the GT rear frame were built during 1972, but Achim believes most of them stayed in Europe.

"The Belgian importer did not receive any," he says. "Most of them stayed in Italy, and a few went to Germany, France and some other countries."

Patience paid off for Achim, who acquired his Z-stripe Sport from a fellow collector, who had found the bike in Germany. "I swapped it against a very rare sandcast 750 GT," he says. After acquiring the bike, Achim started the process of getting his rare Ducati "as perfect as I wanted it."

Restoration

Inevitably, Achim's 750 Sport had had some parts changed over its lifetime, including for example the front Borrani rim. "It was very typical for Ducati to modify parts over the years, but not to change the part numbers,"

he explains. "So, if in 1976 the front rim needed replacing, you could order it at the local Ducati dealer, but you would get the newer version of the later Sport, which obviously fits very well, but is not original from a collector's point of view. Given the rarity of the bike and my aspiration for perfection, I started to collect all the new-old-stock parts I could find for it and dismantled the bike." The first thing he did was completely rebuild the engine, which was not a difficult process. "Original Mondial pistons are the main difference to the lower compression GT, and parts were available in my stock, including the newly zinc-plated original screws," Achim says.

He then turned to rebuilding the wheels, and Achim soon realized how maintaining his attention to detail would make this possibly a unique restoration. "Although the Borrani front rim had the correct reference of 4403, the spacing of the stamps

> on the rim showed it was a 1974 version," he says. "An original 1972 rim was found and laced to the original, two-piece hub." (Later versions had a one-piece front hub.)

> Then there was the matter of the optional front fairing offered only for the 750 Sport. It was a strange affair that allowed the fork-mounted headlight and instruments to rotate inside a large front opening. "Luckily, I had bought an original factory fairing many years ago, but the original hardware to fix it to the frame was missing," Achim says. "I sourced the chrome brackets in Canada, found the screen that goes in front of the headlight in the U.S. and got some last-minute pieces from Bevel Rubber in Australia, whom I highly



The use of Dell'Orto PHF 32mm carburetors allowed the Sport engine to breathe more freely than the GT.





The front fairing was offered only for the 750 Sport (left). The paint color was matched from new original parts.

recommend for their service and quality."

One of the biggest pieces in the jigsaw puzzle was the paint. In typical Ducati fashion, batches of its models reflect the paint available at the time, so there is no definitive shade of the distinctive orange-yellow you see on a 750 Sport. "I got my painter to match the color from original new parts that were not yet affected by UV radiation, which tends to lighten the orange color after just a few years," Achim says.

After painting came the fiddly job of fitting the original waterslide decals. "This was a very difficult task," Achim says. "The large decal on the tank nearly drove me mad. It is in one piece and the tank is curved in three dimensions."

Results

Achim eloquently describes how the final assembly was the most rewarding part of his long journey of restoration and model discovery. "It really gives you the impression you have created something special," he says, adding, "although, of course, you are just repeating exactly what the factory did some 40 years ago!"

He says that when people view his 750 Sport, they are surprised at its level of originality. But he isn't. "I paid attention to the smallest details," Achim says, "like the markings on every bolt and the correct size of every washer and nut. The fuel lines are new-old-stock items with the correct white inscriptions, as is the black breather tube. The ignition wires are original old stock of the correct orange color with original KLG spark plugs ... I could probably go on forever detailing the special features of this bike. Without a stock of original parts and a very good worldwide network of collectors and specialists, it is impossible to undertake such a restoration." Thanks to Achim, there's at least one perfect and correct early Ducati 750 Sport amongst the horde of pretenders. MC

750 Sport prototype replica

Ducati built three 750 Sport prototypes, two running and one a mock-up. The intention was to gauge public reaction, and they certainly made a statement. White frames and black tanks, along with special curved mufflers, never made it into production, but the basic design captured the imagination of a niche of road riders seeking the race track experience at their doorstep.

Some 15 years ago, Ducati enthusiast Rob Labordus became intrigued by this little chapter in Ducati's history. "I believe that the three prototypes were lost after being sent back to Italy; dismantled and used for parts," he says. That inspired him to create a replica of one of the three prototypes, based on black-and-white photos.

"My friend Robert Buijs had an

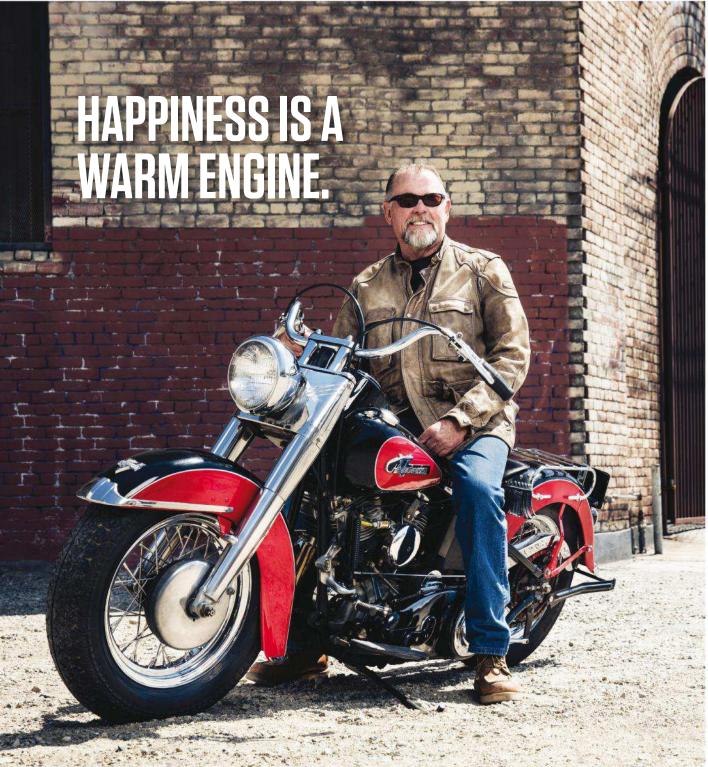


Ducati enthusiast Rob Labordus' 750 Sport prototype recreation.

incomplete but dismantled round-case GT," he says. "In those days round-case Ducatis weren't expensive bikes — perhaps today the decision would have been different." The pair pored over the few grainy photos they had with a magnifying glass and many parts were rebuilt and others adapted — notably the exhaust pipes. "There was a lot of measuring and scaling up from the photographs," Rob says.

They struck a major hurdle when it came to reproducing the paint scheme. "As we based the whole project on a few black-and-white snaps, we weren't even 100 percent sure of the color," he says. "There are many two-tone colors that appear black-and-white on old photos. Eventually, we found a color print and that proved that our decision was correct."

Every once in a while a so-called prototype turns up, but Rob is wary. "To date, each one has proved to be too early, in the wrong frame, iffy background, etc.," he says. "I still claim that mine is the best attempt at recreating one of the original prototypes." — Hamish Cooper





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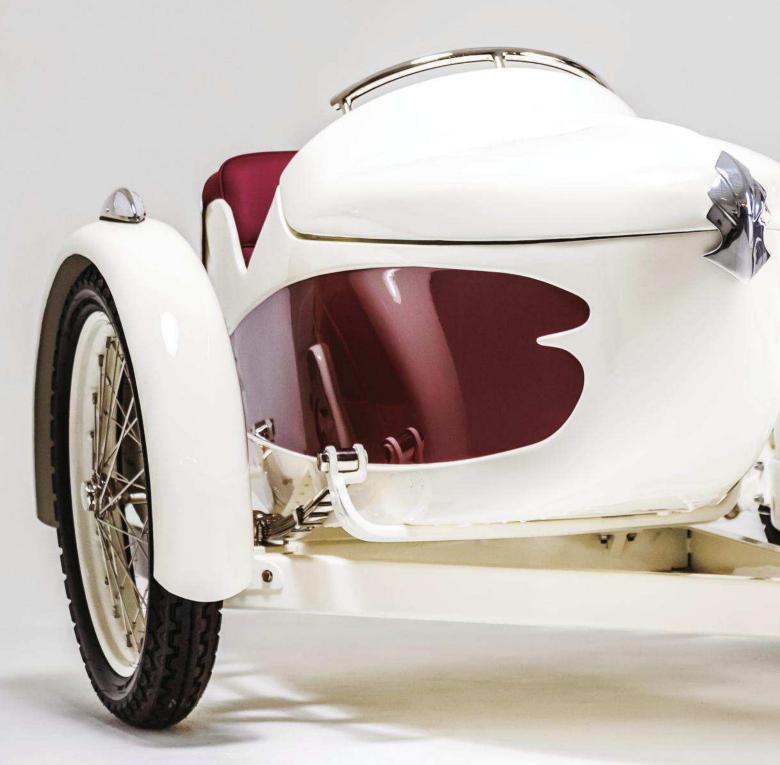






ART DECO ON WHEELS

1930 Majestic



Story by Paul Garson Photos by Serge Bueno and Paul Garson

You could say Serge Bueno has come a long way on several levels.

At 14, he was zipping around Paris, France, aboard a 50cc Yamaha. He would go on to race motocross for 15 years, including the 2001 Rally of Tunisia, a 2,000-mile, 11-day desert run

where he was one of the 60 who finished out of the 300 who started. And for decades he's been tracking down ultra-rare, historic motorcycles and restoring them to perfection.

Four years ago, Serge packed up lock, stock and motorcycle barrels, and moved from France to the U.S. He then built his Los Angeles, California, shop, Heroes Motorcycles (heroes motors.com), literally with his own hands, opening its doors on the day before Christmas 2014, during which he "unwrapped" a treasure trove of antique, vintage and classic machines, along





with a fully equipped restoration facility.

It had been some 30 years since he opened his first motorcycle shop in Paris, specializing in unique racing machines from roughly the 1910-1950 era. He had also established a second location on the Normandy coast, an hour from Paris. His passion for unique motorcycles found him scouring the planet for machines, including the hunt for the rare parts needed to complete their restorations. By current count, he's resurrected over 100 rare bikes, aided by his training as an engineer working with a variety of metals, during which he also mastered old school painting techniques using rare pigments. Those skills translated well to the design and crafting of his own unique custom bikes, blending the best of the past, present and the future.

The oval aluminum dashboard is fitted with matching large face Jaeger speedometer and clock in Roman numerals plus an ammeter and lighting selector switch. Other Majestic models had less elaborate "faces," some were built without the instrument panel altogether.

Coming to America

As for the motivation behind his trans-Atlantic/trans-cultural move to Southern California, Serge says, "Paris is a beautiful place, but Los Angeles is the place for my motorcycle work. So I sold my company in Paris and brought my wife with our four children and 40 motorcycles, and then began building my garage/workshop here on South La Brea Avenue." Word of mouth and social media brought customers in search of Serge's restoration

magic or to purchase one of his completed bikes, and within six months he had sold 15 rare beauties just to get things rolling.

That was some three years ago, and he was already looking toward the future and his goal to see his shop become a motorcycle focal point in L.A., a place to be enjoyed by visitors from around the globe. Which brings us to his second Heroes Motorcycles location, recently established on L.A.'s upscale, poshy Melrose Avenue to serve as the showcase for the restorations completed at the original workshop on La Brea Avenue.

Currently on display is his latest restoration, a motorcycle so rare and exotic, it's certainly earned its name: the Majestic. And yes, it is French, through and through.





Beginnings

Although often unrecognized, the French created a wealth of beautiful bikes, most of them prior to World War II. Hundreds of different marques sprouted in France over the years, including the less remembered Albatross, the Genial-Lucifer, the Blotto and the Hasty ... but also recognized milestones like the De Dion-Bouton, Hildebrand & Wolfmüller (OK, so it was actu-

ally German, but they were also built in Paris), Terot, Peugeot, Motobécane and Majestic.

The Majestic was "knitted together" by Monsieur Georges Roy, whose real business was knitting machines. In the early 1920s, and apparently as a hobby, he began focusing on motorcycle frame design. As an engineer, he wondered what he could create that would upgrade the prevailing but somewhat flexy tubular frame designs. Motorcycles were gaining increased power, and thus suffering from increased metal fatigue from vibration as well as the road conditions of the day, often resulting in frame cracking.

Engineer Roy initially drew up a design for a new type of chassis that solved the flex problem, adding stability as well as protection from the elements to some degree. A French term enters the picture at this point: monocoque, the structural system whereby loads are distressed via the object's surface skin, relieving pressures on the internal frame. Originally employed in boat building, the method was later transferred to early aircraft design. Technically the word means "single shell" and relates to nature's super effective creation, the egg shell.

Roy's innovative approach would not trickle down to car racing until 1962 with the Lotus 25 Formula One, and not until 1967 for motorcycles when Spanish builder OSSA developed a monocoque race bike for the 1967 Grand Prix race season.

Roy's initial design work took

Roys Initial design work took place in 1923, in the midst of the era of Art Deco, with its highly stylized new spin on classical motifs. The Art Deco movement influenced the likes of Picasso as well as designers of boats, planes, cars, trains, furniture, toasters, advertising, textiles and even buildings like the Chrysler Building in New York City.

When he had pieced together his creation Roy applied for a patent, in December 1926, apparently wanting to give the world a Christmas present of a



Owner and restorer Serge Bueno spent several years coaxing the previous French owner to part with the bike.



"The legacy of the

Majestic motorcycle

was brought to the

public's attention some

60-plus years later."

new motorcycle. In fact, he called his new machine the "New Motorcycle." Long lines did not form, but Roy pressed on, fine-tuning his concept with the Majestic, which he unveiled at the prestigious 1929 Paris Automotive Show. There, finally, he got some rave reviews.

Changing direction

The Paris show bike was equipped with an American-made Cleveland 4-cylinder engine and 3-speed transmission. A 500cc single-cylinder French-made Chaise overhead-valve engine was specified for the production Majestic, although various other engines were used, as well.

Unlike the New Motorcycle, the Majestic was not a full monocoque. Beneath the swoopy panels was a steel box-section pressed-steel frame with twin side rails riveted together via crossmembers, along with front and rear bulkheads and floor pans rigidifying the chassis.

Although beefy looking, the bodywork was thin pressed steel, so the bike was actually relatively lightweight, around

350 pounds when fitted with the Chaise single-cylinder engine. The gas tank is hidden from view, sequestered under the front fender, forward of the engine.

The unorthodox front suspension used a hub-center steering design similar to that used on the Ner-A-Car, but with the addition of sliding pillar suspension similar to that used on the contemporary 3-wheeled Morgan cyclecar.

Production versions were apparently available in short and standard chassis versions, the latter measuring 64 inches overall. A review in the July 10, 1929, MotorCycling noted that while the Majestic looked like it had "an abnormally long

wheelbase," the review called this "an optical illusion," saying it was in fact no longer than several other motorcycles then available. Contemporary test reviews of a Chaise-engined Majestic reported that "town speeds" of 35-40mph produced no vibration from the bodywork, with the steering "agile, rather than rock steady."

Oddly enough, after Roy had built his piece de resistance, he refocused on his knitting industry activities, and in 1930, the year Serge's machine was first built, he sold the Majestic rights to another French motorcycle concern, Delachanal, which built motorcycles under the Dollar name. A year later,

with the world gripped by the Great Depression, Delachanal was taken over by Metallurgical and Industrial Omnium, builders of Chaise engines. The Majestic continued in limited production, but the general public didn't clamor for Roy's novel and expensive *Grand Routier* ("grand tourer") although by any measure it was, and is, quite grand.

An estimated 100 machines were produced, most powered by either 350cc or 500cc single-cylinder engines produced

by Chaise. Some were also apparently fitted with a JAP V-twin, and 4-cylinder engines from both Chaise and Cleveland. The last Majestic is dated to 1933.

Roy was definitely dancing to a different drummer when he designed the Majestic. And while he came up with a somewhat streamlined effect, with aero design elements like the louvers and air intakes, the front fender was a bit gaping, no doubt to accommodate the center-hub/sliding pillar steering assembly he used on the Majestic.

The legacy of the Majestic motorcycle was brought to the public's attention some 60-plus years later, when it was

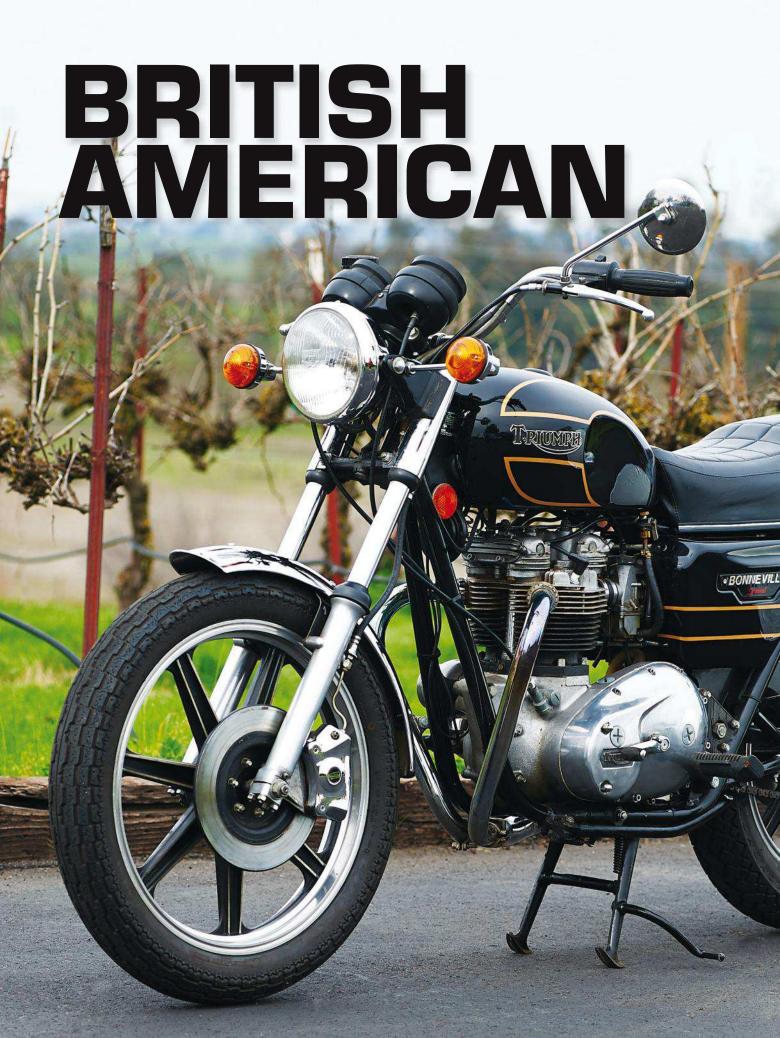


chosen to be one of the 114 milestone machines spotlighted at the highly successful 1998-1999 Guggenheim Museum's The Art of the Motorcycle exhibition as seen in New York, Chicago, Las Vegas and Bilbao, Spain.

Serge spent several years coaxing the elderly French owner to part with this machine, and then hung onto it for nearly 30 years before recently launching into an intensive six-monthlong restoration, bringing it back to its original luster along with a French-made Bernardet sidecar, the perfect match for the Majestic. Powering the duo is a 500cc overhead valve Chaise single-cylinder engine fed by an Amal carburetor.

This is the second Majestic restored by Serge, who plans to show the bike at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, Aug. 26, 2018, MC







1979 Triumph T140D Bonneville Special

Story by Margie Siegal Photos by Nick Cedar

In 1979, Triumph, desperate for U.S. sales, introduced the custominspired T140D Bonneville Special. Unfortunately, it wasn't as custom or as special as Triumph's ads might have tried to suggest. Something of a failure when new, it's a rare bird today, and even old Triumph hands find themselves drawn to its unique lines.

Richard Hardmeyer was flat tracking in the glory days after World War II, when the 500cc overhead valve Brit bikes were going heads up against the flathead 750cc Harleys and Indians. He has a lot of racing stories, but this Sacramento Mile event is one of his favorite memories. "I was at the Sacramento Mile, riding a 500 Triumph twin out of Joe Sarkee's shop. I used my practice tires for the heats, but for the main event they put on a new tire. There was a film of grease or something, and when I went into the first corner I went into a slide, and slid up to the fence. Well, I held on to the bars, picked the bike up and got back into the race. In 23 laps I passed 15 national number plates and ended up in sixth place."

Now 81 years old and still contesting trials and other offroad events, Hardmeyer also rides on the street. After more years than most riding all sorts of machinery, Hardmeyer still likes his Triumphs, and one of his favorite bikes in his collection is this 1979 T140D Bonneville Special.

Triumph bug

Hardmeyer got into motorcycles in high school, acquiring an Ambassador 2-stroke at the age of 15 and a half. The British Ambassador is not well known on this side of the pond, but in the late 1940s and early 1950s, they made wellregarded small bikes, their advertising calling them "The finest value on two wheels!" A friend knew Joe Sarkees, the Sacramento, California, Triumph dealer, and introduced Hardmeyer to Sarkees, who needed someone to help in the shop. Hardmeyer worked after school until he graduated, and then started working there full time. He remembers Sarkees as "the nicest guy — outside of the shop. Inside the shop, he was all business."

Flat track racing was at the peak of its popularity, and Hardmeyer started racing as soon as he was legally able to get on a track. "At the time, you couldn't get a professional license until you were 18. Then you had to spend a year as a novice. The next year you went to amateur, and after three years, if you qualified, you got your expert license."

Hardmeyer raced until he was in his 30s. Then there was the accident: "I went to Washington for this race. I slid sideways, and I was hit by one guy. went up into the air, and got hit by a second guy. I went to the hospital with a concussion and a broken rib. I went back to racing as soon as I healed up, but my heart wasn't in it any more. So I quit," Hardmeyer says.

At the same time Hardmeyer was flat tracking Triumphs, Ed Brooks was selling them out of his shop in San Jose, about 120 miles south from Sarkee's Sacramento emporium. In the 1960s, Brooks was one of the largest Triumph dealers in the U.S. In the years after World War II, running a British motorcycle shop was a way for an enthusiast to make an honest living, and by the 1960s, a way to make a pretty good living. Then came the 1970s.

The fall

The English motorcycle industry was simply not equipped to respond to the rise of the Japanese motorcycle industry, thanks to general management incompetence and years of starving their factories in order to pay large stock dividends. In his book, Save the Triumph Bonneville, former Triumph worker John Rosamond describes his first days of work at Triumph in late 1970. All production had stopped for three months due to problems with Triumph/ BSA's newly designed P39 frame, which used the frame as an oil tank. But the



final drawing came in late, and errors in the design meant that Bonneville engines didn't fit (BSAs did), requiring Triumph to make changes to the rocker boxes and cylinder head. Shortly after the factory was again running, management called a mass meeting to threaten workers with closing the plant if production targets — behind due to the frame design problem — were not met.

Unfortunately for Triumph, the new



Engine: 744cc air-cooled OHV vertical twin,
76mm x 82mm bore and stroke, 8.6:1 compression ratio, 47.4hp @ 6,500rpm (claimed)
Top speed: 100mph (period test)
Carburetion: Two 30mm Amal Mkll
Transmission: 5-speed, chain final drive
Electrics: 12v, coil and breaker points ignition
Frame/wheelbase: Oil-in-frame dual downtube steel/55in (1,397mm)

Suspension: Telescopic fork front, dual Girling shocks w/adjustable preload rear Brakes: 10in (254mm) disc front, 10in (254mm) disc rear

Tires: 4.1 x 19in front, 4.25 x 18in rear Weight (dry): 400lb (182kg) Seat height: 32in (813mm)

Fuel capacity/MPG: 4.5gal (17ltr)/30-35mpg Price then/now: \$2,700/\$4,000-\$10,000

frame was panned by reviewers and customers alike. It was too tall for many riders, and its small oil capacity led to engines running hot. Exactly what problem it was solving was unknown. One reviewer pointed out that the time, energy and money thrown at the oil-



bearing frame could have been used to produce something useful, like an electric starter and disc brakes.

Trying times

The 1971 model year revamp of the Triumph Bonneville had extended to a lot more than the oil-bearing frame. The front forks were new, looking more like the units Ceriani in Italy was building. The 650cc engine had redesigned rocker boxes and pushrod tubes, and





a 5-speed transmission became an option midway through the model year.

The frame was lowered for 1972 to bring the seat height down from a toestretching 34 inches to a more reasonable 32 inches, and 1973 brought yet a further redesign that much improved the frame, along with other upgrades. The 650cc engine was enlarged to 724cc and then 744cc, the 5-speed gearbox became standard, and a Lockheed disc brake found its way to the front wheel. A factory strike in September 1973 stopped production, but a few bikes, basically similar to the 1973 version, were released during the 18-month workers' blockade. A few more bikes were built after the settlement to 1975 specs, and production then ramped up for the 1976 version of the twin.

The Co-op that rose from the ashes of Triumph tried hard to make good bikes with good quality control and an excellent finish, but was hampered by an almost complete lack of money for R&D or machine tooling. Even so, issues with oil leaks were addressed and the Bonneville was upgraded to meet new U.S. environmental regulations and leftside shift requirements. New models were announced, and better quality and enthusiastic magazine write-ups led to a modest sales bump by 1978.

The August 1978 issue of Motorcyclist pitted the Bonneville against its archrival, the Harley Sportster, and the Triumph edged the Sportster out with

better handling and better quarter-mile times. Unfortunately, the pound was strengthening during this period, hammering the Co-op's profit margin and further threatening Triumph's financial footing.

The 1979 Triumph models featured electronic ignition, a lockable seat and better ground clearance, and Allenhead fasteners replaced the previous Phillips head bolts, which were easy to damage. Four color combinations were available in the U.S., Triumph's biggest market, and three in England, with different gas tanks for the different markets. In addition to the regular

Bonneville, there was an extra model, the T140D Bonneville Special, designed specifically for the U.S. market.

The T140D

Designed to capitalize on the growing custom-styled "specials" market in the U.S., the T140D Bonneville Special featured a very attractive black and gold paint job on an American-style "slimline" gas tank, a shortened front fender, a slightly stepped seat, and cast badges. A distinctive 2-into-1 exhaust hung on the right side, and it rode on seven-spoke U.S.-made Lester mag wheels, a first for Triumph, with a fat





The distinctive 2-into-1 exhaust. The T140D uses 10-inch disc brakes front and rear.





The 744cc parallel twin feeds 47 horsepower to the 5-speed transmission, which shifts on the left.

rear tire enhancing the bike's custom look. The engine was basically the same as found on a standard Bonneville, with the exception of threaded exhaust ports.

The Co-op soldiered on, despite worsening economic conditions that led to repeated layoffs. Although a strong British pound was increasing U.S. prices and dampening sales, changes and improvements continued. Bonnevilles finally got an electric starter in 1980, and an 8-valve head came in the middle of the 1982 model year. But in 1983, with the U.S. economy in turmoil and overall bike sales plummeting, the Co-op finally ran out of money. The rights to the Triumph name were sold

to John Bloor, who later built a new factory in in Hinckley, 25 miles away from the old Meriden plant, and got Triumph going again.

Meanwhile, in California ...

Ed Brooks kept the flame alight for a while, but retired in 1984. He sold his extensive parts collection to his service manager, Bob Raber, who is still in business as Raber's Parts Mart (rabers.com). Ed moved his large motorcycle collection to a warehouse. After he died, the bikes sat, while his family figured out what to do with them. Some bikes, including this Triumph, were used as parts donors in order to keep other people's bikes running. Finally, in 2011,

the family called in the auctioneers. Hardmeyer went to the auction.

Prior to the auction, Hardmeyer and his friend Jim Moore had bought out a motorcycle wrecking yard. One of the bikes in the lot was a 1979 Bonneville Special, with missing parts, and Hardmeyer and Moore wanted to restore it. "I looked at the Brooks sale and there was this 1979 Bonneville. We figured we could get enough parts off it to get the one we had running, so we bought it," Hardmeyer says. "When I looked at the speedo of the auction bike, it said 2,000 miles. I found out it was Brooks' personal bike. It was in the shop when he died, and people bought parts off it. We had also bought a BSA Gold Star from another collector, so Jim decided to keep the BSA and let me keep the Bonneville."

The Brooks Bonneville was in better shape overall, and with much lower mileage than the wrecking yard bike. Hardmeyer decided that the wrecking yard bike, which coincidentally had the



Owner Richard Hardmeyer riding his low-mileage 1979 Triumph Bonneville T140D.

parts that the Brooks Bonnie was missing, would be the donor bike, and he would build up the Brooks machine. After a lot of cleaning, replacing missing parts and tending to basic maintenance, the Triumph was back on the road.

"The '79s are a good-handling motorcycle, although they don't handle as well as the late-1960s Bonneville," Hardmeyer says, adding, "1970 was the best-handling Triumph. They made major changes in 1971, and they were not good changes. After 1971, they made changes every year. By 1979, they made it back to a good bike. But for the best handling, you have to put that 750 engine in a 1969 frame." That said, he still holds the T140D in high regard. "The 750 Special is special; it's a little upgraded. The problems from 1971 were corrected, and it has better handling and a good engine. It's definitely a little

buchananspokes.com



bit better than the rest of them."

Better yet, Hardmeyer says they're easy to own, noting that maintenance on a 1979 Bonneville is similar to that on a modern motorcycle. He suggests changing the oil at least once a year, regardless of mileage. "The more you change the oil, the longer your bike will

last," Hardmeyer says, adding that it's a good idea to check and change fork oil regularly, as well. Tuneups are easy, thanks to electronic ignition, and the disc brakes — front and rear — don't require much beyond regular brake fluid changes to keep the seals in good shape. Pads seem to last forever. MC

Azusa, CA



Est. 1958



750S America

Story by Greg Williams Photos by Rasy Ran

Motorcycles excite all of the senses. When it comes to sight, they can be beautiful or ugly and even in between.

In regards to smell, they emit a heady scent of oil, gasoline and rubber — and heat has a way of intensifying the effect. Touch? There are many different textures on a motorcycle, from cast aluminum to welded steel — and of course there's the sensory overload of actually riding, and that's where taste could enter the picture. And aurally. motorcycle engines produce their own distinct music, whether a tiny 2-stroke single-cylinder or a large 4-stroke multi-cylinder.

Enthusiast Mark Cummings appreciates everything about motorcycles, but in the late 1980s it was the sound of an MV Agusta 750S America that sent a chill down his spine.

Growing up in Fort Worth, Texas, Mark started off riding a Honda Mini Trail. Larger bikes followed, and by the time he entered his first year of college he'd saved enough money to buy a used BMW R90/6 from the late Perry Bushong.

Perry was a master mechanic and sidecar enthusiast who, starting in the early 1970s, bought, sold, traded and repaired BMWs and many other exotic European machines, including MV Agustas. Through the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Mark haunted Perry's shop, BMW of Fort Worth. It was a place that fueled Mark's motorcycling dreams.

A glorious noise

He also worked at Perry's shop for a spell. Mark was well on his way to earning a degree in art history when he decided to take a break from school. That's when Perry offered

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him a job behind the parts counter, and Mark says he never looked back. "I was just about to start writing my thesis," Mark explains, "but after I started working at Perry's shop, that was it for me."

Mechanically inclined, Mark moved back and forth from the parts counter to the mechanics' bays, where he pulled wrenches. And he clearly recalls being behind the parts desk the day John Woody pulled up behind the shop on an MV Agusta 750S America. "John was out back revving the engine of his 750S," Mark says. "I had to drop what I was doing to go see what it was because it was just such a glorious noise."

That noise echoes back in time to 1907, when Count Giovanni Agusta founded Costruzioni Aeronautiches

Agusta Spa to build aircraft near Varese, Italy. Agusta died in 1927, leaving the company to his widow, Countess Giuseppina, and his eldest son, Domenico. At the end of World War II the Agusta company was banned from aircraft manufacturing, so Count Domenico and his brother Vincenzo started Meccanica Verghera, the MV in MV Agusta, building motorcycles as a way to save jobs.

Starting with a 98cc 2-stroke, a number of small-bore machines led the way to developing a 4-cylinder, 4-stroke engine in 1950. Through the 1950s and 1960s, MV was a win-



Engine: 789cc air-cooled DOHC inline four-cylinder, 67mm x 56mm bore and stroke, 9.5:1 compression ratio, 75hp @ 8,500rpm

Top speed: 130mph (est.)

Carburetion: Four 26mm Dell'Orto VHB
Transmission: 5-speed, shaft final drive

Electrics: 12v, distributor ignition w/coil and breaker points

Frame/wheelbase: Dual downtube w/engine as stressed member/54.7in (1,389mm)

Suspension: 38mm Ceriani telescopic forks front, dual Ceriani shocks w/adjustable preload rear

Brakes: Dual 11in (280mm) disc front, 7.9in (200mm) SLS drum rear

Tires: 3.5 x 18in front, 4 x 18in rear Weight (dry): 517lb (235kg) Seat height: 31.5in (800mm) Fuel capacity: 6.3gal (24ltr)

Price then/now: \$6,000/\$80,000-\$90,000

John Surtees signed the tank of the MV at Daytona in 1994 (left). The MV has seen just more than 5,000 miles from new.

ning company on the racetrack and their 4-cylinder machines dominated the 350cc and 500cc classes in the hands of racers such as John Surtees, Giacomo Agostini and Mike Hailwood.

But those multi-cylinder machines were track-only devices until Count Agusta decided in the mid-1960s that it was time to offer a 4-cylinder street bike (see Motorcycle Classics, January/February 2018). Equipped with an all-alloy 4-cylinder double overhead cam engine with dual carburetors, it had a 58mm x 56mm bore and stroke for an overall capacity of 592cc. Officially launched in 1965, only 127 examples of the MV 600 were built, but the production machine provided the groundwork for the feature bike seen here, the 750S America.

Coming to America

In 1969, MV enlarged the 600 to 743cc and fitted a bank of four 24mm Dell'Orto carburetors to create the 750GT, with shaft final drive. Alongside the GT, MV also offered the sportier 750S, a motorcycle that Bike magazine claimed to have the most powerful 750cc engine ever made.

MV Agusta's U.S. importer was Commerce Overseas Corporation in New York, headed by Chris Garville. In 1974, Garville and MV retailer Jim Cotherman visited the MV factory to press their case for a revised 750 that would better suit the tastes of the U.S. market. "The American duo proposed a series





of changes to update the existing 750 MV Agusta," an article from the May 1975 issue of Cycle magazine claimed. "The factory took their proposals under advisement and began work on a revised roadster."

According to Cycle magazine, power output was one of the most important aspects of the redesign and MV pushed overall capacity to 789cc. MV did this by enlarging the pistons by 2mm, taking the bore to 67mm while retaining the

56mm stroke. Compression was given a slight bump, from 10:1 to 10.2:1, and the cylinder head was revised, with freer-flowing intake tracts, larger intake and exhaust valves and re-shaped combustion chambers.

A quartet of larger 26mm Dell'Orto VHB carburetors were installed and a hand-hammered aluminum cover went over the air filter. Gear-driven cams rotated via a matched set of three straight cut gears driven off the crankshaft; these were situated in a tunnel between the individually removable cylinders. The four aluminum alloy cylinders with cast iron liners attached to a "crankshaft block," a subassembly that held the pressedtogether crank in four split-cage roller bearings, with ball bearings at each end. Once built up with the crankshaft, the entire sub-assembly bolted into a tub that was cast in the engine case.

Doubtless, it was not cheap to produce. "Hardware junkies blow themselves away on MV engines," Cycle magazine said. "It is a masterpiece of precision castings, gears, needle bearings,

ball bearings, shafts and all other things in the hard goods department. Were it mass-produced, the engine would still be murderously expensive to build."

Bosch equipment provided the electric starter/generator that mounted behind the engine sump and a Bosch automotive-style distributor ensured current arrived at the spark plugs at the correct time. The engine and transmission were built in-unit and the gear ratios in the primary, gearbox

> and rear drive were the same as the 750S. The mill bolted into a steel duplex tube frame that, apart from a longer and stronger steering head, was unchanged from the 750S in terms of overall geometry and wheelbase. On the America, however, a beefier Ceriani fork with wider triple clamps and 38mm tubes anchored the front, and included a pair of 280mm discs with a set of Scarab calipers topped off with Tomaselli clip-ons.

No changes were made to the rear swingarm or shaft final drive, either. Front and rear wheels were both 18 inches with Borrani rims, the front equipped with a 3.5 x 18 inch Metzeler ribbed tire and a 4 x 18 inch Metzeler racing block on the rear. At 562 pounds wet the America was no lightweight, outweighing its shaft-driven contemporaries like the BMW R90S and Moto Guzzi Sport by 70 pounds.

During Cycle magazine's time with the America, testers found that tire pressures played a critical role in how the machine handled. With 28psi front and 32psi rear, they said the bike "would









The 789cc DOHC inline-four produces 75 horsepower at 8,500rpm. This bike wears a 4-into-4 exhaust from Kay Engineering.

weave and snake treacherously in fast corners." Lowering the rear to 26psi produced a "stable condition" that didn't leave the rider fearing for life and limb.

Despite being dubbed the America and ostensibly built for the North American market, MV also sold the model in Europe. With the European machines included, it's thought as many as 540 Americas were built, with 200 sold in the U.S.

The Texas connection

In 1952, Agusta returned to the aeronautics industry, building aircraft as well as motorcycles. They built Bell helicopters under license, and Bell has its headquarters in Fort Worth — and that's how Perry Bushong became associated with MV Agusta motorcycles.

According to Mark, Perry always liked to tell his story. "In the mid-1970s a team of Italian engineers from Agusta was visiting Bell, and because they were also motorcyclists they came to see Perry in his Fort Worth shop," Mark says. "They were impressed by Perry, and suggested he should be selling MV Agusta motorcycles."

In order to become an MV dealer, Perry had to buy five of the America models from Garville. Not flush with cash, Perry called five of his influential clients and they backed him to make the purchase. After that, Perry was linked to MV and the machines became an important part of his life.

The first two MV Agusta 750S America motorcycles produced were sent to importer Chris Garville in 1975. They were displayed at trade shows and loaned out to the motorcycle press for testing. One of these bikes, manufactured in June 1975 with engine number 221012 and frame number 221009, is the machine featured in the Cycle, Big Bike and Motor Cycle World tests. It's also the bike featured here. "These two bikes were sent around the U.S. One was crashed and not used again, making this one the lone survivor of the pair," Mark says.



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"I bought it because I

wanted to ride it, and

because of the visceral

reaction I'd had to having

heard one running."

Ownership of the magazine test bike was transferred from Chris to his brother Peter Garville in 1984, and Peter kept the bike until 1990. That's when Peter approached Perry Bushong about trading the America straight across for a just-released and fully loaded BMW K100RS with ABS.

"Perry knew I had been looking for an America and he offered me first crack at it, and I jumped on the chance," Mark explains, adding that to fund the purchase he had to sell his Vincent Series C Rapide. "I bought it because I wanted to ride it, and because of the visceral reaction I'd had to having heard one running.

"For the first four or five years I'd ride it if not daily, then at least three or four times a week. You aren't crouched over

uncomfortably, and I'm 6 feet tall. The seat, bar and peg positions were all in good proportion. Overall, the bike was very stable thanks to its good suspension system. Clutch action wasn't stiff and when you got on the throttle, the bike got on it, too. Honestly, the bike simply didn't have a lot of quirks to it, it was just a joy to ride."

Shortly after buying the America, Mark left Perry's shop and began working a different job where he used his

motorcycle riding skills to carry camera men as they shot rolling footage, among other tasks.

In 1994, while at the BMW Battle Of The Legends event in Daytona, Florida, Mark asked racing hero John Surtees to autograph the gas tank of his 750S America. "He was gracious enough to sign the fuel tank," Mark says. He was more than a little glad John agreed, because Mark's painter had already slightly scuffed the red paint in preparation for the felt pen. A layer of clear coat preserved the integrity of John's signature.

After that, Mark rode the bike sporadically, mostly at bike events and shows until 2014, when he approached Perry about performing a sympathetic cosmetic restoration. The America was always properly stored, but it had started to

look a little tired. Perry took the bike apart, but with only 5,000 miles nothing major had to be done or rebuilt. Rather, everything but the gas tank was detailed and made shiny again after a little bodywork and paintwork.

At the time, Mark took the opportunity to fit a racing exhaust system built by MV Agusta specialist Dave Kay of Kay Engineering in the U.K (mv-agusta.co.uk). It was something he'd always wanted to do, and he says it not only looks fantastic, but it makes the America sound even better — something he didn't think was possible.

The MV was finished in November 2016, and Mark sadly notes that it was Perry's last restoration, as he died in early March 2017. Within the same week, John Surtees died. "I just

find it an odd circumstance that two people connected to the bike died in the same week," Mark says.

That caused Mark to do a bit of soul searching, because not long after, he decided it was time to move the MV Agusta along. "I've got a few other motorcycles that are needing some attention and I'd like to get some money together to keep those bikes rolling," Mark says. "It wasn't an easy decision, but a bike can get to a tip-

ping point where it's worth so much you become very self-conscious about riding it, and you're almost uneasy."

In 1975, the MV Agusta 750S America was the most expensive motorcycle sold in the U.S., selling for \$6,000 at a time when a top-of-the-line BMW sold for almost half the price. It was a figure that prompted the editors at Big Bike magazine in 1976 to quip: "The MV Agusta is, without question, the most expensive, exotic and bizarre motorcycle that has ever filtered around our inexpensive, exotic and flat-freako offices. Ever."

Today, that \$6,000 now sounds a paltry price to pay for a premium Italian motorcycle that makes the most glorious noise and is capable of exciting all of the senses. ME

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The external tachometer drive on the right engine case (left) turns the large Smiths tachometer (middle).

The history of this Parilla was hard to trace because its story was interrupted at some point. Its frame was stripped and stored away for years, until its path miraculously intersected with a person armed with the specific skills to bring it to life again. Alberto was quite aware that this Parilla was as close as he might ever get to owning any version of this hand-built racer, so he jumped at the chance, made the deal and eagerly waited for it to arrive from Italy. All that was left to do was call other collectors to share his good fortune, and have every one of them respond in the same way: "Are you kidding? He SOLD that?"

A little history

If this machine looks vaguely familiar to you it might be because its inspiration was the well-known and beloved Norton Manx, a motorcycle that to this day draws sighs in race paddocks around the world. How that came about is a pretty good story that, like many amusing tales from that day, began with a dare.

Surprisingly, with a name like Giovanni Parrilla, Giovanni wasn't Italian. Born and raised in Spain, Giovanni found himself

in Milan, Italy, as a young man after leaving the military. There, he took a job as a diesel injection pump mechanic. Crazy about motorcycle racing, his work lunches were spent bench racing with his fellow workers. One day after a particularly bad race finish for the Italian factories, Giovanni, to the amusement of his friends, declared he could build a better entry than the current offerings. Bets were taken, and incredibly, he began his quest.

He was most impressed with the racing results of the Norton Manx, which was doing well at that time. Giovanni bought one, took it apart, measured, drew and studied. When he was certain he had what he needed, he reassembled it, found a buyer and used the cash to start his work. It may have been a bold call, but history shows it was the right one. His life would be changed forever, his legacy secured, his motorcycles truly Italian in every way.

Over the next 18 years he produced more than 150 models, from racers to scooters, all graced by the famous racing greyhound logo. Today, one-off prototypes and racers aside, the best loved and most coveted of the Parillas (the company name used only one "r" instead of two) is the Moto Parilla Grand Sport,



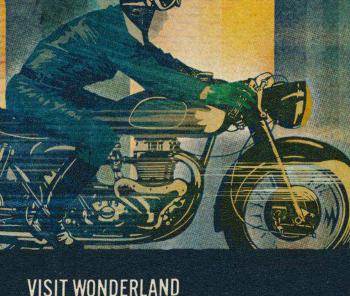
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Alberto Sisso's F3 wears hard-to-find parts like the correct Sturcher rear shocks (above) and 22.5mm Dell'Orto carb (top).

specifically the hotrod version known as the MSDS, which stands for Macchina Sport Derivato dalla Serie. In English this translates to Sports Machines Derived from the Series. The MSDS, although considered a regular production bike, was more of a "catalog racer." Built in small numbers, the model is rare and desirable — somewhere in the range of 25 MSDS Parillas made it to the U.S. The F3 that it inspired, on the other hand, was a pure racing machine, used by factory riders and a very few elite privateers. By any account, the F3 was and remains something special.

From the ground up

As with many race bikes, this one was inspired by its special frame, found at an Italian swap meet by famed Italian F1 and MotoGP race patron Patrizio Cantu. Perhaps best known as Valentino Rossi's team manager, Cantu had the contacts, resources and perseverance to take on a project of this size and gather the hard-to-source items unique to the F3 like the rear shocks, the 22.5mm Dell'Orto carburetor and the quick-detach fuel tank.

The search for original parts stretched from Italy to the U.S. and Australia. Some pieces, like the special cast magnesium brake, were purely unobtainable right from the get-go. Only found on factory Parillas or on a Parilla owned by someone with special factory connections, and made in small numbers and prone to cracking, very few still exist. The search for that part now continues on the part of Alberto, but all the other hard-to-find pieces did emerge, and one by one found their way back onto the factory F3 frame.

Original Corsa front forks, the correct aluminum, larger capacity, longer and wider Grand Sport fuel tank and even the super rare (and very special for the period) Sturcher rear shock absorbers were found and installed. Made in Italy, these shocks were very technologically advanced for the time because they were

both air and oil damped, with adjustable dampening. As with most state-of-the-art racing parts, they were rare and expensive right from day one. Somehow, a set was sourced and installed.

A true "hi-cam" production racer, the F3 is different from a regular production MSDS by its frame, swingarm and the state of tune of the engine. Somewhere between eight and 10 F3 frames are known to have been produced. A prototype was built in 1957 and was successful enough that the remaining handful were produced for the 1958 season. To identify the differences between the frame of an F3 and an MSDS, look at the rear tube bend radius — it's much tighter than a standard MSDS. The swingarm is different as well — the MSDS sports a production "U" swingarm while the F3 uses a gusseted, straight-tube swingarm. Finally, F3 frames are lighter, as they are made from thinner tubing.

In the flesh

When the bike arrived in South Florida, Alberto could finally get a real look at his purchase. His Parilla F3 had survived its journey with no damage and its beautiful vintage patina fully intact. It started and ran. A good cleaning revealed the usual small issues — the manufacturer's tag for the seat needed to be sourced and replaced, and a couple of decals could use adding, but all in all it was in remarkable shape for a sight unseen purchase from halfway across the world. And, of course, he's still looking for that front brake. Alberto plans to bring his Parilla out to share with appreciative admirers, on occasion, and he's hoping, fingers crossed, that one of the other Parilla collectors might eventually take on the task of overseeing another Parilla Days reunion to get all the Moto Parilla collectors together once again (see the January/February 2016 issue of Motorcycle Classics for coverage of the last one). That's just the kind of weekend where crazy rare manufacturer-specific Holy Grail parts tend to turn up. And he's got his checkbook ready. MC



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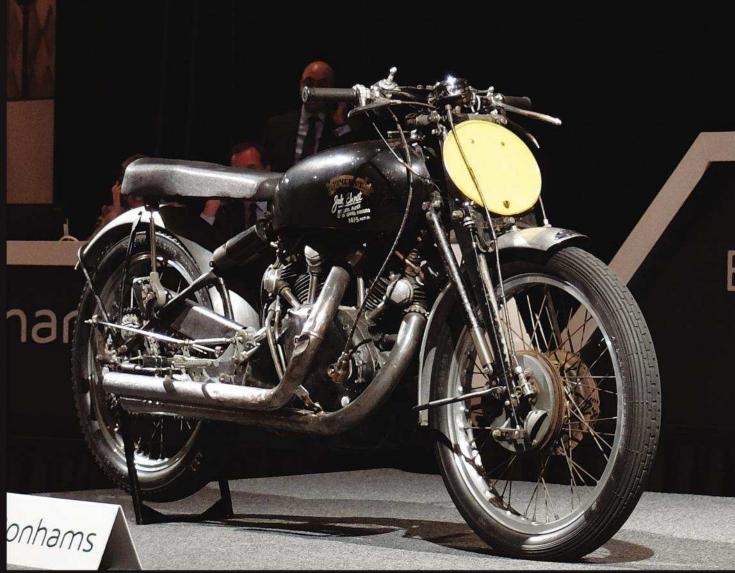
The annual Vegas vintage bike auctions show plenty of demand and a changing market

By Robert Smith and Somer Hooker Photos by Robert Smith

The annual January Las Vegas vintage motorcycle auctions always produce interesting if not surprising results, with record highs and unexpected lows. But while the auctions are seen as an indicator of where motorcycle values are going, the direction isn't always clear. Longtime enthusiasts and collectors Robert Smith and Somer Hooker share their observations, with Robert's report first.

Provenance sells

The ex-Tony McAlpine, Jack Ehret 1951 Vincent Black Lightning set a new motorcycle price record of \$840,000 (\$929,000 including buyer's premium) at Bonhams' 2018 Motorcycle Auction in Las Vegas. The 1953 Australian Land Speed Record Vincent was sold to a telephone bidder and is heading back to Australia. Also into six figures were 1926 and 1939 Brough Superior SS80s, fetching \$126,875 and \$120,500, respectively.



No other motorcycles offered at Bonhams (including five other Vincents) sold for more than \$100,000, and two machines expecting big money failed to sell: a 1975 MV Agusta 750S America reached \$72,000, while a 1977 MV 850SS was bid to \$80,000. Neither made the reserve price.

Meanwhile, the five-day Mecum auction across town offered 1,750 motorcycles. Headlining the Mecum auction was a 1911 Harley-Davidson model 7D, the first H-D twin, which made \$154,000 (a similar machine sold for \$260,000 in 2014). A 1917 Henderson Four with Steve McQueen provenance sold for \$110,000, with a Patrick Godet Egli-Vincent with Black Shadow engine (a former Best of Show winner at the LeMay concours) going for just \$250 less. Also selling for just over \$100,000 was a 1941 Indian Four.

The biggest difference between the Bonhams and Mecum auctions was of scale, with some 100 motorcycles on the block

at Bonhams against Mecum's 1,700-plus. But there were still some interesting comparisons of similar machines sold at both auctions. For example, a 1990 Honda RC30 with just 14 "push" miles fetched \$92,000 at Bonhams, but you could buy one with 11,000 miles at Mecum for "just" \$44,000. Two examples of the RC30's competitor, the Yamaha FZRR OW-01, sold, one with 74 miles at Bonhams and another with 8,700 miles at Mecum, for \$34,500 and \$17,050, respectively.

And while Ceccato may not be a household name, there were three of the tiny race bikes from the early 1950s for sale: a 75cc single overhead cam at Bonhams from the Jack Silverman collection and two 100cc machines (one single overhead cam, the other a double overhead cam) at Mecum. Bonhams' single overhead cam Ceccato sold for \$16,100, while Mecum's in similar condition sold for \$33,000. The difference? Possibly the fact the Mecum bike was signed by its designer — the





legendary Fabio Taglioni. Other Italian bikes at Mecum included an unrestored 1974 Ducati 750GT that sold for \$17,050, a 2008 Ducati Desmosedici D16RR for \$50,600, and a rare 1988 Bimota DB1SR at a very reasonable \$19,250. A 1978 Ducati 900SS bevel sold for \$47,300, while a 1973 750 Sport sold for \$55,000.

Early Japanese superbikes included a rare sandcast 1969 Honda CB750 Four selling at \$32,450, while two 1973 Kawasaki

Z1s fetched \$23,100 and \$24,200.

British bikes usually abound at Mecum, and typically, shiny sells higher. Restored Triumph unit-construction twins from the late 1960s were selling in the low- to mid-teens, with top dollar going to a 1966 T120 at \$16,500. But a signed 1952 Dick Mann replica TR5 with the rare "generator" engine managed only \$6,600, and a 1952 TR5 Trophy just the same amount. Thirteen Norton Commandos sold for an average of \$12,500, while unit

> BSA twins made an average of \$8,800, and eight BSA Victors averaged \$7,300.

> But two of the most expensive items at the Mecum auction had no wheels at all: the rights and title to the Excelsior-Henderson brand for a reserve price of \$3 million — bidding stalled at \$1.9 million and a metal neon sign that was formerly fixed above the employee/visitor entrance to the Harley-Davidson Milwaukee plant. It sold for \$88,500! — Robert Smith

The times, they are a changing

I've been going to motorcycle auctions for 30-plus years now. In many collectibles markets, trends change and collectors buy certain vehicles for different reasons, primarily: You always wanted one and now you can afford it; you had one and sold it and now you want it back; you think it is going to appreciate.



A nice, original 1974 Ducati 750 GT sold at Mecum for \$17,050.



These are all valid, and I'm sure you've heard people say, "They're always going to go up. Get on board now." Once, I heard an auctioneer implore bidders to buy and come back the next year and double your money. The only thing that doubled were the fees.

In the past, collectors enjoyed nice, over-restored vehicles. This was a trend in cars and bikes, and many original bikes got restored because their good sheet metal provided the ideal canvas. But as we moved into the 21st century preservation became the buzzword, along with original paint. I'm glad to see an effort to preserve original bikes — it's how we save our history — but it's also led to people creating original paint bikes: faux patina and distressing has become an art form.

Whenever something sells at auction for a new high price, a dozen more come out of the woodwork. I remember a pristine BMW R69S selling for double the usual price. At the next auction around 40 or so /2 series BMWs showed up! They were cheap that day.

It is a commodity-driven market. British bikes were and are popular with the Baby Boomers, but as Baby Boomers age out, they are starting to dispose of their British motorcycles, and lots of parts and bikes have come to market. Many a Boomer's dream was ful-



1980 Vetter Mystery Ship, the fifth of 10 made, sold for \$33,000 at Mecum.



Low-mileage 1974 Norton John Player Special sold for \$17,050 at Mecum.



Bargain Brit: 1947 Velocette KSS for \$1,650 at Mecum. At that price, it either needed new guts or was missing major internal bits.



filled when they purchased that Norton or Triumph, and then the bikes just sat afterwards.

There were 19 Vincents offered in Las Vegas this year. In the past, only a few showed up at auction, and they usually did well. I sold a Vincent Black Shadow at auction in 1988 for



Bonhams' 1977 MV Agusta 850SS was a no-sale at \$80,000.



First-year 1967 Moto Guzzi V7 sold for \$10,925 at Bonhams.

\$27,000, a shocking price at the time. A few years ago, they were selling for five times that amount. Although the Ehret Vincent Black Lightning record holder with original paint sold for \$929,000 this year, Vincents typically sell for under \$100,000. Twenty years ago, people were amazed when a

> Triumph Bonneville sold for \$17,000. Immediately, a lot of them came out of the woodwork, and Britannia began to rule. It was the same scenario for any bike Steve McQueen had sat on or much less looked at.

When I started attending vintage motorcycle auctions in the 1980s, you almost never saw Japanese bikes, and if one did show up, people complained! Then Japanese buyers showed up and started buying the desirable ones, and this year Japanese bikes may have outnumbered English bikes. What we called Superbikes have become the Supersellers. This year there were 16 Honda CBXs offered, and their values were up, with one getting \$15,400 and three going for \$12,000-plus. Suzuki GT750s were strong, with five on offer and selling in the \$7,000-\$8,800 range. Kawasaki Z1s were also strong, with two '73s breaking through the \$20,000-plus range, and a low-number Honda CB750 KO sold for \$32,450. It probably would have done better but for the incorrect parts it had. Clearly, the Rising Sun has risen.

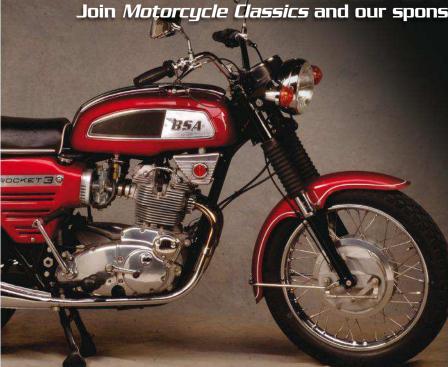
Some dirt bikes are looking good, too, with lots of solid, well preserved or restored offroad bikes offered this year, and truly nice examples like a 1975 OSSA 250 Phantom fetching over \$10,000. Add in some significant, documented race history and the price goes up. While offroad and vintage Motocross racing is popular in AHRMA, I don't think any of the ones selling are going to kick up a dust trail anytime

The bottom line is simply this: Collectible markets are always in a state of flux. Certain things can become "hot," but nothing stays hot forever. My advice is always to buy something you like, because you may have to live with it for a long time, and objects that "spark joy" are always a good investment. — Somer Hooker MC

(Prices include buyer's premium except where stated.)

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1919 Harley-Davidson Model W Sport

Story by Margie Siegal Photos by Nick Cedar

During most of its long existence, Harley-Davidson has built its reputation more on making powerful, reliable and sturdy V-twin-powered motorcycles than on innovation. Yet in 1919, Harley introduced an entirely new engine with essential features that wouldn't become part of the family lineup for almost another decade

By the end of 1918 and with World War I over, the Harley-Davidson company looked forward to peace, prosperity, and selling motorcycles — especially to veterans who had been introduced to motorcycles while in the military. Company engineer William Harley thought these new riders would want an innovative, user-friendly motorcycle with updated features, and he headed for the drawing board to deliver.

The bike that H-D introduced to dealers in mid-1919 was definitely innovative. Advertised as the Harley Sport, the Model W was the first Harley with a sidevalve top end, which was state of the art at the time. Before 1919, all Harley-Davidson engines featured the intake-over-exhaust valve configuration used on most motorcycle engines since the 1890s. Running without valve



seals, inlet-over-exhaust engines routinely blew oil mist all over the rider's pants. Competitor Indian was proving that sidevalve engines were not only quieter and cleaner, but also powerful, reliable and fast, and Indian's sidevalve motorcycles regularly won both speed contests and endurance races. It seemed reasonable for Harley to experiment with a setup that had been proven by other companies.

Harlev's flat twin

The engine William Harley conceived was unlike any previously built by Harley-Davidson. Unlike Indian's V-twins, Harley's new engine was a flat twin. Except unlike the now-familiar BMW with its cylinders sticking out to either side, the cylinders on Harley's new sidevalve were in line with the frame, one forward of the crankcase and one aft. Interestingly, this cylinder arrangement, chosen to minimize vibration, was used by Indian on the 1917-

The leading-link front fork of the Model W Sport used a central spring link connected to the downtubes through pull rods instead of a more common leaf spring (left).

1919 Model O, which was taken out of production the same year Harley introduced its own flat twin. A single casting combined the intake from the carburetor and the exhaust to the muffler. Advertising literature of the time claimed that heating the intake charge helped atomize the fuel for combustion. Given the poor quality gasoline that was generally available, it probably did.

One camshaft operated both the intake and exhaust valves. The engine and gearbox for the 3-speed transmission were housed in the same set of castings, split vertically. A "bacon slicer" outside flywheel was covered by a pressed steel cover. Oil was circulated by a plunger pump, and rear drive was by an enclosed chain.

Motorcycles of the era needed constant maintenance thanks to a combination of dusty roads, lack of air cleaners, and oil that was chock full of carbon coating the interiors of gasoline-powered engines with a black goop that needed to be cleaned out on a regular basis. The Harley Sport had features that made maintenance easier. The valve guides on the Sport screwed into place, and the cylinders could be removed for cleaning and the valves could be ground without removing the engine from the frame. The frame used the engine as a stressed member.

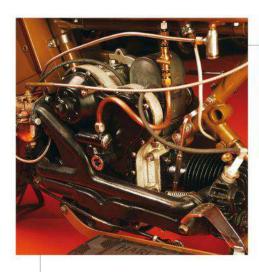
A Sport selling point was its 29.5-inch seat height. Early motorcycles, most based on bicycle frames, were very tall, and often scared new riders trying to get a foot down on a gravel road. Sport sales brochures pointed out that the flat-twin engine lowered the center of gravity, helping with easy riding, making the low seat on the Sport ahead of its time. In the mid-1920s, frames began to be designed that would allow a short rider to firmly plant both feet on the ground, and low seat heights were trumpeted in advertisements.

Yet another innovation of the Sport was the front fork, which was different from other Harley models. Like contemporary Indians, it was a trailing link design, but instead of a large leaf spring the Sport had a central spring link connected to the downtubes through pull rods. The chain final drive was fully enclosed, helping the bike stay cleaner and helping with chain lubrication. The Schebler carburetor was protected by Harley's first-ever use of an air cleaner.

Competition

On paper it all sounded wonderful. In the real world, there were a few problems. First of all, the competition for the Harley Sport was not other motorcycles — it was the Ford Model T. Before World War I, four wheelers were too expensive and complicated for the average person to own. The first Model T's cost \$825 when introduced in 1908, at a time when the average worker's salary was about \$3,000 a year. By 1919, the price of a Model T had dropped to a little more than \$500. People bought motorcycles to get from Point A to Point B. A motorcycle had to be either significantly cheaper or much more fun to compete.

The 1919 list price for the Sport was \$335. Advertising for the Harley Sport emphasized its advanced features, its powerful engine, and the pleasure a rider would experience. Advertising copy assured the prospective buyer that all of the Sport's new components had been thoroughly tested. Harley-Davidson claimed the opposed twin was designed for cross-country riding, and to back this up sponsored Hap Scherer on a long-distance run on the Sport while also trumpeting the achievements of Jack Fletcher, who rode his Sport up loose rock and dirt to the top of



10,064-foot Mt. San Antonio north of Los Angeles.

The top speed on a Harley Sport was 50mph. That actually wasn't too bad for the era, a time when most roads were dirt. The Sport sold reasonably well after its introduction in the second half of 1919 and for the start of the 1920 season. Then Indian introduced the Scout, powered by a 596cc sidevalve V-twin.

Even though the Sport had a comparable displacement of 584cc, the Indian Scout was faster. Indian's chief engineer, Charles Franklin, may have happened

upon the "squish" principle of flame propagation in cylinder heads independent of Harry Ricardo, who is usually credited with its discovery, and employed it on the new Indians. The Scout broke the Three Flags (Canada to Mexico) and transcontinental records set by larger bikes, and set a world record for covering the most miles over a closed course. The Scout was peppy — 11 horsepower compared to the Harley's 6 horsepower — and it was reliable: the Harley Sport's rear cylinder was out of the airstream and had a tendency to overheat. Not hurting things, the Scout also had that great V-twin sound. The Sport, by comparison, sounded tame.

Sport sales sputtered. In its first year, Harley built and sold fewer than 800 Sports. In 1920, that number jumped significantly,



Engine: 35.64ci (584cc) air-cooled sidevalve horizontally opposed twin w/cylinders in line w/frame, 2-3/4in x 3in (69.9mm x 76.2mm) bore and stroke, 3.75:1 compression ratio (est.), 6hp (factory claimed)

Top speed: 50mph

Carburetion: Single 3/4in (19mm) Schebler Transmission: 3-speed handshift, chain final drive

Electrics: Magneto ignition

Frame/wheelbase: Single downtube keystone-style w/engine as stressed member/57in (1,448mm) Suspension: Trailing link w/single spring front, rigid

Brakes: 7in (178mm) external contracting drum rear Tires: 3in x 26in front and rear (3in x 20in modern equivalent)

Weight (wet): 250lb (114kg) Seat height: 29.5in (749mm)

Fuel capacity: 3gal (13.6ltr) Price then/now: \$355/\$25,000-\$45,000



The horizontally opposed twin sits inline with the frame (left). The clutch is operated by the rider's left foot (above).

with over 5,000 Sports produced. But in 1921, less than half of that left dealers' showrooms, and in 1922, Harley sold fewer than 1,000 Sports. In 1923, 1,095 Sports left the factory. At that point, Harley gave up and retired the model.

Few changes were made during the model run. 1919 and early 1920 Sports were not available with electric lights. Riders wanting to ride at night used

accessory acetylene lights, powered by a gas now mostly used as a welding fuel. From the mid-1920s on, Sports could be ordered with much safer electric lights. Changes for 1920 included a new battery case, a new toolbox cover and miscellaneous small parts. For 1921, a new tank logo was used and some additional, minor parts were changed. The engine was beefed up in 1922, but for 1923, with the model clearly on its way out, there were no changes.

Aftermath

Although the factory gave up on the Sport, it did not give up on sidevalve engines. In fact, the Model W paved the way for the future. Harley's intake-over-exhaust top ends were reaching the





end of their possible development. Although overhead valve engines were being developed for racing in the 1920s, they were not yet practical on the street. Metallurgy and lubrication development had not yet reached the point where an overhead valve machine was reliable enough for everyday use.

Sidevalve engines appeared to be the way to go, and in 1924 Harley started developing a sidevalve single, largely for overseas markets, introducing its first motorcycles with this engine in 1926, featuring squish head technology licensed from Harry Ricardo. Sidevalve 45-inch V-twins appeared in dealers' showrooms in the summer of 1928, and 74-inch sidevalve V-twin twins appeared in 1929 — just before Wall Street collapsed. These sidevalve engines were accepted by riders and got Harley through the worst of the Depression.

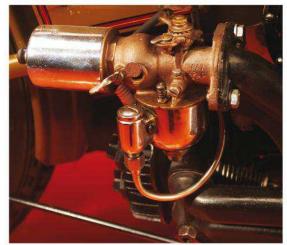
Not wanting to give up on a proven — and frankly inexpensive — design too soon, Harley stuck with sidevalve engines for years. The company continued to build street sidevalve two wheelers until 1956, and KR racing sidevalves until 1969. Harley produced three-wheeler Servi-cars, powered by a 45-inch sidevalve engine, for parking enforcement use until 1975.

Survivors

Few Model W Sports have survived. The Sport had something of a following in Europe (Harley-Davidson had a big export business there) and several have been found there, and in New Zealand and Australia. A few made it through the World War II scrap metal drives in the U.S. One, a 1919 machine, came to the capable hands of master motorcycle restorer Mike Parti.

In his earlier years, Mike was a hot rodder, motorcycle racer and all-round hell-raiser. In 1975, he broke both arms in a crash and decided to turn his interests and skills to restoring motorcycles. Mike was one of the earliest restoration experts, getting involved just before collecting antique American motorcycles went from the preoccupation of an eccentric few to a mainstream hobby. Like most restorers, Mike built bikes for customers, and if he took on a project on spec, he sold the bike as soon as it was finished in order to finance the restoration of the next machine. This Sport went to one enthusiast, who sold it to a second, who eventually decided to include it in the yearly antique motorcycle auctions in Las Vegas, Nevada. Which is where it came to the attention of Thom McIlhattan.





The handshifter sits on the left side of the tank (left). The single 3/4-inch Schebler carburetor feeds both cylinders (above). The central front fork spring (right).





Thom is a man with many interests, and the former owner of Harley-Davidson of Vallejo in Northern California. Now more or less retired, Thom is assembling a collection of vintage motorcycles, which mandates frequent trips to the Las Vegas auctions.

"I got into collecting by a total mistake. I was still running

the dealership at the time, and someone showed up with a 1950s K model in a pickup truck." Thom bought the K, and soon afterwards, he started looking to buy other historic bikes, with the intention of assembling a display of the evolution of the American motorcycle.

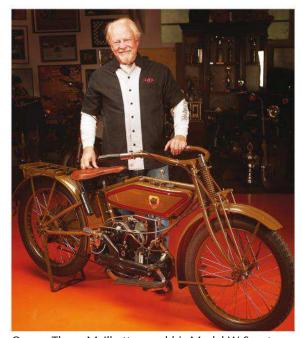
"I have a fascination with how things came to be. I wanted the Sport because I didn't have anything to fill that particular time period in motorcycle history. The Sport was such a change from what Harley-Davidson had been doing — so much was new, and the bike was lower and narrower than other Harley models. It's a shame about that rear cylinder, though. If the rear cylinder would overheat, you could kiss your exhaust valve goodbye." Thom continues: "There was only one other person vaguely interested in the motorcycle at the auction. The bike was in running

order and needed no work at all. A collector's delight. I usually don't want to do much to a bike I buy for my collection, and this bike fired up when I bought it."

Thom points out that in 1919, people viewed motorcycles much differently than they do today. "The most important

thing at the time was reliability. A motorcycle was a tool, something you used to get around. For example, the luggage carrier on the Sport was part of the bike as delivered and not an accessory. It had to work. I found a story about a contractor who used a Sport to survey Death Valley. He rode it 1,200 miles around some very unforgiving terrain with no problems," Thom says.

Although the Sport was Harley's first venture into sidevalve production and was not a success, Harley used the experience to improve its next sidevalve models, which were very successful. And the Sport still has its attractions — and increasingly its attractors — today. "I like looking at the Sport," Thom says. "I like its lowness and its narrowness, and I like that it is kind of Harley-Davidson's missing link." MC



Owner Thom McIlhattan and his Model W Sport.

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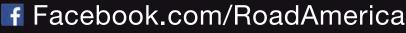


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BEST KE SECRET

1950 Zenith Big Twin

Story by Alan Cathcart Photos by Kel Edge

Zenith [noun, usually singular] = pinnacle, apogee, summit [antonym, nadir, abyss].

That's how the Cambridge Dictionary describes the name that British engineer Frederick W. Barnes, then 27, chose in 1905 to market an innovative two-wheeler with a low-slung frame and hub-center steering named the Bi-Car. Powered by a 3 horsepower German Fafnir engine, when launched at the Crystal Palace show that year it was said to be "a revolution in motorcycles." Though the Bi-Car had a short life, its maker went on to experience both the zenith and the nadir of two-wheeled existence, including Brooklands race victories and twice breaking the World Land Speed Record. Moreover, Zenith rode out two world wars. and survived receivership as a consequence of the Depression before finally succumbing in 1950, simply because it could no longer source engines to fit its bikes. That's quite a roller coaster ride, and yet even with that long history, the Zenith name is mostly unknown.

Zenith Motors

London-based Zenith Motors was a small manufacturer, but had significant success in speed contests throughout the Teens and Twenties. Manchester-born Freddie Barnes was the driving force behind it, a pioneering inventor who relished the stimulus of competition. After the Bi-Car, he began production of more conventional Zenith motorcycles in 1907 in his North London workshop with the Fafnir-powered Zenette, with a Druid girder fork and a triangular frame with optional scissor-action rear suspension. In 1908, to overcome the difficulty of climbing gradients in the days before motorcycles had gearboxes and when direct belt drive was the norm, Barnes developed and patented his own variable drive, the Gradua Gear system. Originally known as the Barnes Pulley, this provided a rider-selected continuously variable final drive ratio controlled via a handle and the ratio could be altered on the move. Other variable crank pulley systems of the day required the machine to come to a halt before the gearing was changed.

It did so by simultaneously changing the diameter of the crankshaft belt-drive pulley to alter the drive ratio while moving the rear wheel back and forth via worm gears within slots cut into the rear chassis fork, in order to maintain correct belt tension. A later hand crank system operated the mechanism via a vertical shaft and bevel gears, which made the Zenith Gradua almost impossible to beat in the increasingly popular speed hill climbs of the pre-World War I era. A Zenith rider could change gear while climbing the hill without stopping, while other competitors had to make do with a single choice of gear ratio. And







while the change in the wheelbase was undesirable, it wasn't a great issue at 1908 speeds. The system produced infinite variations in gearing from as low as 9:1 up to 3.5:1, but rival riders and manufacturers held this to be an unfair advantage, so many clubs excluded Zeniths from their events. Barnes was quick to capitalize on this ban, and registered a new trademark in 1911 emblazoned with

the word "Barred" in bright red letters across the Zenith emblem!

Competition

The opening of the Brooklands circuit at Weybridge in



Engine: 747cc air-cooled sidevalve 50-degree V-twin, 70mm x 97mm bore and stroke, 6:1 compression ratio, 24hp at 4,000rpm

Top speed: 63mph

Carburation: Single 1-inch (25mm) Amal Type 75/274 pre-Monobloc

Transmission: 4-speed Burman, chain final drive Electrics: Lucas Magdyno

Frame/wheelbase: Single-loop tubular steel frame with bifurcated lower double cradle/56in (1,420mm)

Suspension: Druid girder fork front, rigid rear Brakes: 7in (178mm) SLS drum front, 7in (178mm) SLS drum rear

Tires: 3.5 x 19in front, 4 x 18in rear Weight (dry, est.): 385lb (175kg) Fuel capacity: 3.6gal (13.6ltr)



1907 acted as a magnet for firms such as Zenith, led by entrepreneurs like Barnes who relished demonstrating their products in competition. With increased demand for its products necessitating a bigger factory, Zenith Motors moved to Weybridge in 1908, just half a mile from the track. In March 1909, aboard a Gradua-equipped Zenette-JAP, Freddie Barnes set the

very first standing-start record (18.63 seconds, averaging 12.89mph!) for climbing the steep Brooklands Test Hill, which every customer Zenith Gradua road bike was certified as having done, after stopping and restarting on the 25 percent





gradient, something no single-speed bike could do. Barnes was also a mean racer, setting many speed records and successive Test Hill marks, as well as scoring many race victories at Brooklands on Zenith machines, and chalking up numerous successes in long-distance reliability trials.

Zenith's large range of models employed proprietary engines such as Precision, Fafnir, Bradshaw and Villiers, but it was the engines from J.A. Prestwich, made just the other side of London, that predominated. Zenith began building JAP-powered race bikes in 1911, employing chain-drive countershaft gearboxes. After two seasons of development, in 1913 Zenith introduced three customer racing models with overhead valve JAP engines and chain-drive transmissions — two singles and its first competition V-twin. The following year its road models featured a blend of the two final drive systems in the form of a chain-driven countershaft complete with clutch and kickstarter mounted in front of the crankcase, which carried a large pulley to drive the rear wheel via a long belt, retaining the Gradua Gear and rear wheel movement. The engines still came from JAP, but all were now V-twins of 3.5 horsepower, 6 horsepower or 8 horsepower formats.

With war approaching, Zenith began focusing on making commercial sidecar outfits, ostensibly to replace the horses commandeered by the military. Like many companies, from 1914-1918 Zenith placed its manufacturing operation at the disposal of the War Office. Zenith's JAP-powered civilian production restarted in 1919. In 1921 a model with a 494cc

oil-cooled Bradshaw flat-twin engine was introduced, with the choice of belt-drive transmission with the Gradua gear or all-chain drive via a 3-speed Sturmey-Archer gearbox. With belt final drive increasingly out of favor, the Gradua system was dropped from 1923 onwards.

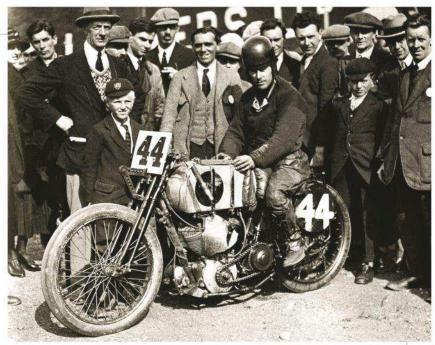
After Brooklands reopened in 1920, Zenith resumed its racing and record-breaking success, with Freddie Barnes switching to a support role to those such as speedy customer I.P. Riddoch, who enjoying repeated victories at Brooklands. There, in October 1922 on a Zenith fitted with a JAP overhead valve V-twin FTOR engine, Bert Le Vack became the first man to break the 100mph barrier on a British motorcycle, with a speed of 100.29mph — in pouring rain! Douglas Davidson had been the first to achieve this feat in April 1921 on a Harley-Davidson, also at Brooklands, but in 1925 the outright Brooklands motorcycle lap record was captured at 109.90mph by another Zenith-JAP rider, Joe Wright.

By then, Zenith riders held more Gold Stars for the number of Brooklands laps at over 100mph than those of any other marque — Zenith was simply the make to have if you wanted to earn a ton-up Gold Star. In 1926 the record was raised to 113.45mph by Wright's fellow Zenith-JAP rider, and ex-WWI flying ace, Captain Owen Baldwin. Two years later, Wright recaptured the Brooklands speed crown at a remarkable 118.86mph, where it stayed until 1935.

Zenith went into receivership in 1930, a victim of the Great Depression, but by July 1931 Zenith was back in business after







A small decompression lever sits on the lower side of the left grip to aid in starting the engine (top left). Zenith creator Freddie Barnes on a Zenith at Brooklands, year unknown (right).

being purchased by one of its biggest dealers, Writers Ltd. of Kennington Cross. Production restarted with a range of JAP-engined bikes, headed from 1933 onwards by the Big Twin. Powered by a JAP 747cc sidevalve 50-degree V-twin engine measuring 70mm x 97mm, this long-stroke slugger was as different as could be from previous Zenith V-twins. Yet it was a child of those dismal times for which there was a ready market. As many as 20 different Zenith models fluttered in and out of the company's sales brochure during the 1930s, from a 172cc Villiers-engined 2-stroke and up in capacity, but the stolid, solid-selling Big Twin stayed put, and was especially appreciated by the sidecar set.

The Big Twin

World War II interrupted Zenith's production, and sadly brought the demise of Freddie Barnes, who was killed in a 1942 Luftwaffe air raid on London. But the company's Hampton Court factory survived intact, with the added benefit of the River Mole's waters driving a generator to supply free and constant electricity during the frequent power cuts during and after the war.

Quite remarkably, production of Zenith motorcycles recom-

menced in 1948, although shortages of metal and other materials meant there was just a single model, the venerable girder-forked 747cc sidevalve Big Twin, exactly as manufactured before WWII. Around 250 of these are supposed to have been made from 1948 on, many of them exported to colonial outposts, before Zenith finally ceased production in 1950, starved of engines.

While perfectly solvent, Zenith had run out of stocks of the 747cc sidevalve V-twin, which JAP wasn't going to manufacture anymore on the grounds that it was outdated even by 1940s standards, and attempts to source an alternative engine came to naught. Zenith was forced to shut down, and the story of what's arguably the most successful British marque nobody's ever heard of today came to an end.

Sammy's Big Twin today

Gone, but not forgotten — especially by Sammy Miller, whose eponymous museum (sammymiller.co.uk) on Britain's South Coast has two very different Zenith models among the 300-odd bikes it has on display at any one time. One is a 1921 model, and the other is a Big Twin carrying chassis no. 14015, which identifies it as the penultimate Zenith to be made. (The very last Zenith, built just after our feature bike, was apparently shipped to Australia.) Sammy's Big Twin is fitted with JAP engine number MTW 73710, which was manufactured in Tottenham in the 1930s, but sat on the shelf all through the war until finally utilized in this motorcycle.



The Sammy Miller Museum

The Sammy Miller Museum (sammymiller.co.uk) in New Milton, Hampshire, U.K., is crammed full of interesting machines — including factory prototypes and numerous ingenious designs from all over the world. It also counts as one of the world's largest collections of exotic racing bikes, all of them in running order and including the legendary Moto Guzzi 500 V8, the supercharged AJS 500 V4 and post-war Porcupine, and innumerable famous bikes from Triumph, Norton, AJS, Velocette and many more. There are also offroad enduro, motocross and trials icons. The museum is open to visitors daily from 10 a.m. year-round.



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It was first registered on June 22, 1950, before eventually finding a home with a Mr. Peter Bennett on Aug. 14, 1954 — he's the only previous owner in HVB 574's logbook. Sammy bought it complete but in somewhat shabby condition about 25 years ago — the 23,733 miles shown on the Smith's speedo are probably accurate — and after smartening it up it's been a mainstay of the Museum's array ever since. The chance to take this handsome-looking two-wheeled dinosaur with its dash of purple on the fuel tank for an afternoon ride around the nearby New Forest roads delivered a window on another world that's all but forgotten today.

In the immediate aftermath of the global conflict that interrupted the Zenith Big Twin's production for six long years, what mattered most to potential customers was not performance, but durability and economy, and above all the ability to run on the ultra-low octane gas being rationed, which even by 1950 had not risen above 80 octane. The Zenith's sidevalve JAP engine, first manufactured in the 1920s with its 6:1 compression ratio, was ideally suited.

After settling astride this machine's comfortable Lycett saddle and kickstarting it easily into life thanks to the low compression ratio, I select bottom gear of the four available in the Burman gearbox — a type which had seen active service

on thousands of Matchless G3L WWII army bikes, thus demonstrating its robustness.

First and second gear are very low, with family sidecar use in mind. I easily proved that the Zenith will start off from rest in third gear on level ground while hardly slipping the light-action clutch. The lower three ratios are merely a passport to selecting top, but having done so, to waft along with barely a whiff of throttle at 45-50mph as shown on the 125mph reverse-sweep Smith's speedo — surely left over from the days when Zenith V-twins were vying for a Gold Star! — was relaxing and enjoyable on a warm English summer's day.

That's the Zenith's comfortable pace, and indeed on the Big Twin it's the journey that's important, not how fast you get there, although if you really insist you can coax almost 65mph out of the sidevalve powerplant — but no more. That may seem laughably slow for a 750 by today's standards, but back then it was quite sufficient for this to be considered a practical and robust conveyance, especially on roads that had suffered under wartime bombardment or simply had not been maintained.

The long-stroke JAP engine is willing and hearty, and while far from potent, it's flexible and forgiving, partly thanks to the small 1-inch (25mm) Amal carb serving both cylinders,

but most of all to that massively long stroke. You can throttle back to 15mph on the speedo in top gear, yet the Zenith will accelerate cleanly away without transmission snatch, nor any need to touch the clutch lever. It's a semi-automatic in all but name. Equally vintage in character are the Zenith's cycle parts, with its

rigid frame devoid of rear suspension, and the Druid girder fork unable to do much in the way of cushioning road shock. Yet the Big Twin's estimated 385 pound dry weight ensured it sat down well over the worst of bumps, and in spite of the rigid rear end it didn't skip about much at all over them.

The pair of 7-inch single-leading-shoe drum brakes front and rear set into Zenith's own hubs coped OK with the kind of momentum the Zenith's engine is capable of delivering, and dropping into third gear delivered quite effective engine braking, so with just me aboard it stopped well enough. With a



The Zenith has a fairly slim profile, aside from the large protrusion of the Lucas Magdyno on the right side of the engine.

pillion and the kids and a loaded sidecar, that would be a different matter. however.

The Zenith did steer unexpectedly well, though, considering that the machines that achieved most of Zenith's enviable competition success as a company did so in straight-line speed events or in races on the Brooklands bankings. But those weren't such a stern test of handling in turns, but predominantly of high-speed stability, and at the much lower speeds that the Big Twin was capable of, it seemed stable and reassuring.

And indeed, that's the irony of this motorcycle, for having gained such a glorious reputation for tech-

nical innovation in the early days of motorcycling, followed by competition success at the highest level, Zenith's last model was a faithful friend of a low-performance plodder with which the British marque saw out its days before bidding farewell to the marketplace. MC



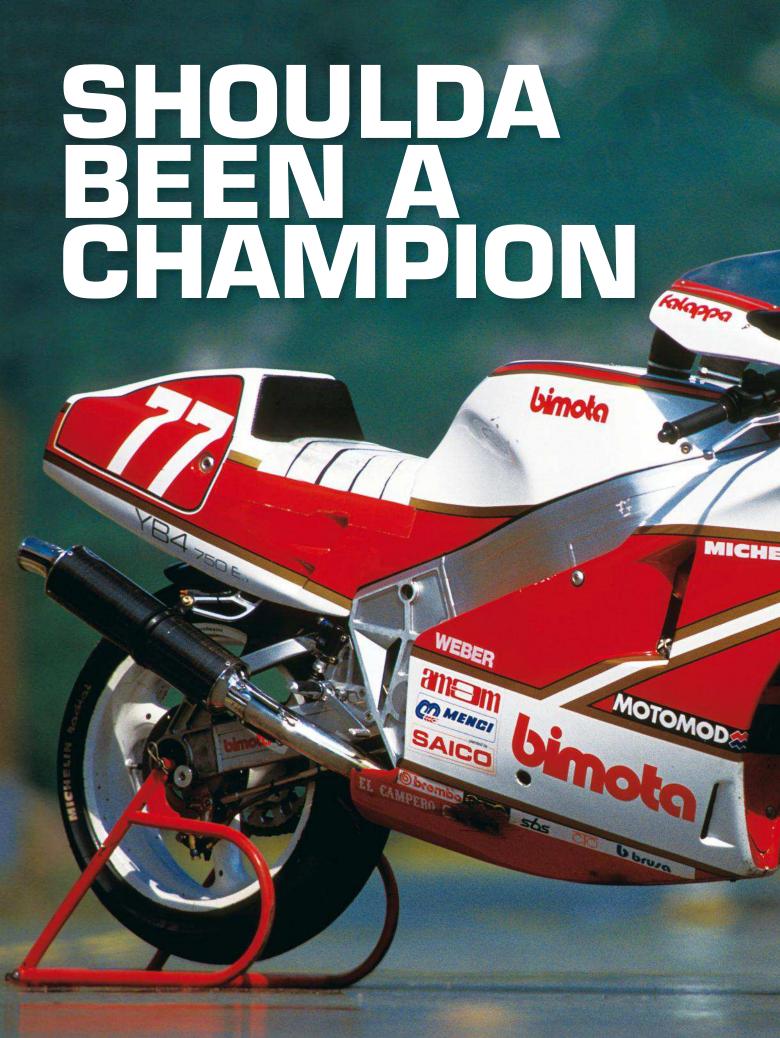
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Bimota YB4EI-R

Story by Alan Cathcart Photos by Phil Masters

Thirty years ago, on April 3, 1988, the first-ever race in the World Superbike Championship was staged at Donington Park in England. It was won by Davide Tardozzi on the works Bimota YB4EI-R, marking the first step in what promised to be a march to the inaugural World title by the small, specialist Italian manufacturer's 750cc 4-cylinder Yamaha-engined bike.

But after crashing in the second race held that day, Tardozzi forfeited any points on combined results for his victory in the day's first race — an anomaly in the rules that was immediately corrected, but not backdated, that eventually deprived him and Bimota of the World Superbike Championship (WSBK) title. After winning five races in the nine WSBK rounds held that year — two more than any other rider — Tardozzi went into the final race of the 1988 series in New Zealand leading on points, only to crash on the warm-up lap, handing the slower but more consistent Fred Merkel the first-ever World Superbike crown on his Rumi Honda RC30.

This wasn't just a personal tragedy for Tardozzi and Bimota, but seemingly even more unfair because it was the Yamaha-powered, fuel-injected YB4EI that effectively pointed the way for future generations of sport bikes from larger manufacturers, especially in Japan, to excel both on the racetrack and in the showroom.

Launched in fuel-injected street guise at the 1987 Milan Show, the YB4EI was the work of Federico Martini, and in carbureted guise in the hands of Virginio Ferrari had previously wrested the 1987 World TT F1 crown from Joey Dunlop and the Honda trophy cabinet. So Tardozzi's World Superbike challenge was recognition of the specialist Italian manufacturer's successful efforts to push back the frontiers of two-wheeled technology, then deliver the results to their customers on the street in the form of a racer-with-lights. For the lucky owners of the 317 YB4EI customer bikes made by Bimota from 1987 to 1989 — 19 of them the YB4EI-R competition version — the model set new standards in 4-cylinder handling and poise.

Milestones

The Bimota YB4EI was the first series production 4-stroke motorcycle to use a GP-style aluminum twin-spar frame, which later would become almost universal on Japanese sport bikes. Bimota brought race track-derived chassis technology to the street, and was a leader in the adoption of fuel injection, employing it on the YB4EI and refining its Weber/Marelli engine management system to uncover EFI's benefits of better acceleration, reduced fuel consumption, a lighter and more responsive throttle action, and lower emissions — already by then an increasingly vital aspect of street R&D.

For 1989, Tardozzi was replaced in the works Bimota SBK team by Giancarlo Falappa, a reformed motocross racer whose spectacular way-out race-winning style brought him instant acclaim in only his second season of road racing and, in due course, a works Ducati contract. But there were changes also



in the back office, with Bimota's chief engineer and the creator of the YB4EI-R, Federico Martini, lured to Gilera by Piaggio money and the chance to develop a 250GP racer from a clean CAD screen. His replacement was obvious — Pierluigi Marconi, creator of the hub-center Tesi project, who had been working alongside Martini since graduating from university three years earlier.

Under Marconi's direction, Bimota took the carbureted

Yamaha FZ750 engine design the YB4 debuted with in 1986 to win the World TT F1 title in 1987, and nearly win the World Superbike crown in its first season with EFI in 1988, to its ultimate level of development for 1989. But there was no more to come, making 1989 Bimota's last season in the sun with the fuel-injected four. "We're at the limit of our potential with this FZ750 engine," said Marconi in July 1989. "There's no more to come from it, and since for homologation reasons we can't use the OW 01 engine which Yamaha have replaced it with in our bike, this is as far as we can go in Superbike racing at present."

Ferrari's TT1 bike had delivered 115 horsepower at 12,000rpm with 34mm Mikuni carbs and engine tuning parts mostly restricted to the contents of the Yamaha FZ750 race kit. That identical basic engine was ultimately persuaded to deliver 132 horsepower at the rear wheel at 12,200rpm in WSBK race form, though Marconi said he'd seen 137 horsepower on the dyno, but with an unacceptably

narrow power band.

This was achieved by Bimota's comprehensive re-engineering of the FZ's internals, with parts specially made by a host of European suppliers. These included a new, lighter, Italian-made crankshaft; Pankl titanium connecting rods; 0.3mm oversize 68.3mm Mondial pistons to bring capacity up to a full 749cc and deliver 12:1 compression; valves on the 20-valve double overhead cam engine enlarged by 1mm over standard

to 24mm inlet, 22mm exhaust, with each now fitted with dual springs; and a selection of trick camshafts to suit different circuits. Additionally, Yamaha supplied a special version of its close-ratio 6-speed FZ kit gearbox to Bimota, with shorter ratios in each of the bottom three gears. Four of the team's five race engines used Yamaha's dry clutch, but for some reason the fifth had a standard oilbath clutch, and this proved invaluable, since the Yamaha dry clutch had no exhaust for removing the dust off the plates, which meant it was prone to begin slipping even if cleaned before a race.

Bimota was the only 4-cylinder team to be able to employ Weber/Marelli EFI thanks to its homologation on the YB4EI road bike. Bimota logically took advantage of the hands-on experience in electronics this inevitably brought to extend the degree of computerization to include electronic data gathering. At the 1989 mid-season Canadian WSBK round at Mosport, the small Italian team debuted the real time data



Engine: 749cc Yamaha liquid-cooled DOHC transverse inline four-cylinder, 68.3mm x 51.5mm bore and stroke, 12:1 compression ratio, 132hp @ 12,200rpm

Top speed: 170mph (Hockenheim 1988)
Fueling: Electronic fuel injection and engine management

system, with Magneti Marelli ECU, single injector per cylinder and four 42mm Weber throttle bodies

Transmission: 6-speed Yamaha close-ratio, chain final drive **Electrics:** 12v, electronic ignition

Frame/wheelbase: Twin-spar aluminum frame/54.7in (1,390mm)

Suspension: 44mm Öhlins inverted telescopic fork front, Öhlins monoshock rear

Brakes: Dual 12.6in (320mm) Brembo floating steel discs front, single 9in (230mm) Brembo steel disc rear Tires: 12/60 x 17in front, 18/67 x 17in rear Weight: 363lb (165kg) with oil and water, no fuel



The Weber/Marelli electronic fuel injection system metered combustibles to the 749cc inline four (left). Twinspar aluminum frame was a first for a production motorcycle (facing page).

acquisition system they'd been using in testing, developed in conjunction with Marelli and employing an IBM-compatible Toshiba MS-DOS computer with an Italian Digitech software package.

This not only enabled them to monitor the fueling by plugging directly into the on-board ECU, but also to obtain a host of other material relating to chassis behavior and more. Principally, this included suspension travel front and rear, steering lock, speed and acceleration. Combined with readouts of the angle of the throttle butterflies and rpm, this told Marconi what he wanted to know about the bike's behavior at any given point of the track, at any moment in time — stuff we now take for granted at any level of racing. Back then, this was new technology very much in the making.

The Weber/Marelli EFI employed a single injector per cylinder and an ECU containing the single EPROM chip mounted on a carbon-fiber panel under the back of the seat. The EFI/EMS

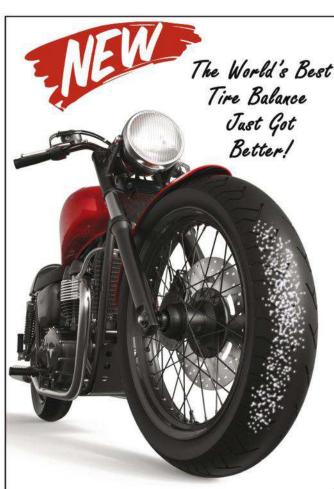
(electronic fuel injection/engine management system) was known as the ALPHA NP system, after its three fundamental parameters: Alpha=throttle butterfly angle, N=rpm, and P=state of fuel delivery. These in turn were affected by two secondary parameters, namely ignition advance and injection timing, and the YB4EI-R carried sensors which monitored all of these functions, as well as supplying data on water temperature, air pressure and temperature inside the airbox, and battery

voltage, which if it varied up or down from the 12-volt norm altered both the ignition advance and injection timing, hence a compensatory function had to be built into the system.

Although they didn't yet have the works Ducati team's handlebar-mounted switch enabling the rider to choose between three different chips out on the circuit, as a factory Italian team with close ties to Weber/Marelli, Bimota could cook their own EPROM chips off the bike with the Toshiba PC, as well fine-tune them once installed in the ECU via a portable programmer. However, having once perfected the engine's running this way, it was important not to stall or cut the engine, because the mapping then defaulted to its original settings.

Bimota led the way in developing a telemetry system to enhance setup on a motorcycle that was the first of the current breed of 4-stroke Superbike racers in chassis design, too. The YB4EI-R was extremely compact and close-coupled, with a 53.9 inch (1,370mm) wheelbase in its final guise (down from 55.9)







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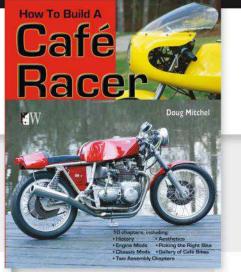
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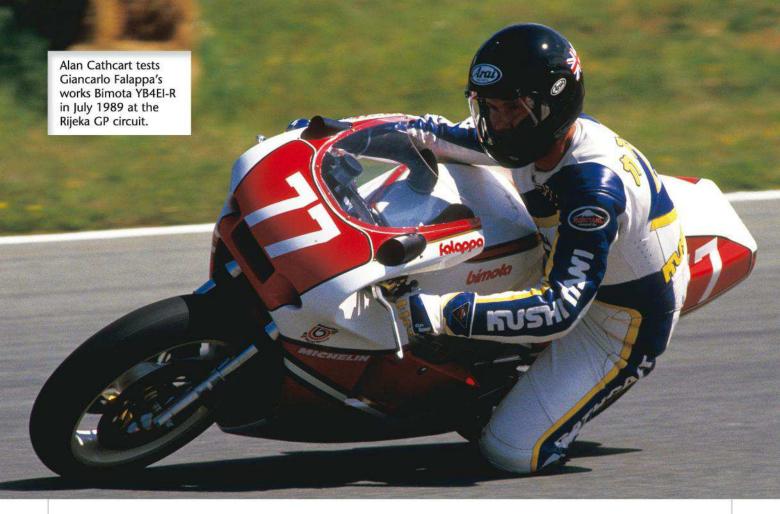
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inches/1,420mm) three years earlier. Head angle was a steep 24.3 degrees and trail a mere 3.85 inches (98mm), the sort of steering geometry you'd have found back then on a factory 500GP V4, which would also have had a weight distribution not so different than the Bimota's 54/46 percent, which was itself a big change from Martini's original 50/50 layout on the first YB4.

It was also light at 363 pounds dry — after an amazing 15.4 pounds of lead ballast had been added to meet the 4-cylinder weight limit and came with an aggressive power delivery, coupled with an appetite for revs that dictated constant use of the close-ratio race kit gearbox. Indeed, the Bimota was a true 4-stroke GP racer, a decade and a half before the creation of MotoGP.

The Bimota's beautifully fabricated twin-spar chassis was made in Anticorda 100 aircraft alloy, with the slant-block FZ750 engine tilted back in the frame so the cylinders lay at an angle of 36 degrees from vertical, rather than the original FZ750 Yamaha's 45 degrees. This was aimed at obtaining a shorter wheelbase, achieved by recasting a new magnesium sump to allow the Bimotadeveloped exhaust to sit snugly under the engine, later copied by Yamaha itself on the OW 01. A sturdy Öhlins upside-down fork with 53mm outer upper tubes and 44mm lower

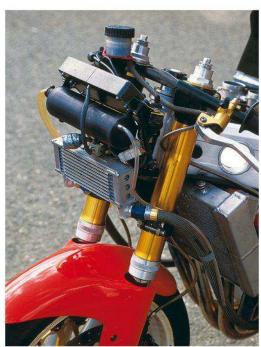
inners was combined with either an Öhlins or Marzocchi fully adjustable rear monoshock. Then-massive 12.6-inch (320mm) Brembo front discs and 4-pot calipers completed the picture.

On track

Riding the ultimate version of the fuel-injected Bimota

YB4EI-R in July 1989 on the Rijeka GP circuit in what was then still Yugoslavia was an introduction to the modern world of Superbike racing, in spite of "only" having threequarters of the engine capacity and two-thirds of the horsepower of a current WSBK four. Bimota had by then much refined the Weber/Marelli EFI, whose R&D hiccups had ultimately cost the Italian factory the debut World Superbike crown in 1988, with Tardozzi suffering engine management problems on his Bimota in several races, especially in Japan and Australia. The pickup from the responsive but quite stiff throttle was now more predictable and precise rather than hit-and-miss, albeit still very fierce, but with improved fueling.

The carbureted TT F1, with which Ferrari won Bimota its second World title in 1987, was a super-fast race bike, but the fuel-injected YB4EI-R was a different breed. To obtain competitive horsepower from the Yamaha engine, Bimota had been forced to



The racer wears upside-down 44mm Öhlins adjustable forks at the front.



narrow the power band and go for revs — lots of them. The power delivery was fierce, but with little happening until the LCD readout on the digital TDD dash showed over 8,000rpm and the Bimota started fueling properly. From 9,500rpm upwards there was truly explosive power on tap, sending the YB4EI-R rocketing forward, wriggling and weaving as great gobs of power were released to the rear Michelin radial tire. But with that 12,200rpm peak and a 13,000rpm rev limiter, you didn't have much of a powerband to play with — certainly not by the standards of today's meaty race bikes.

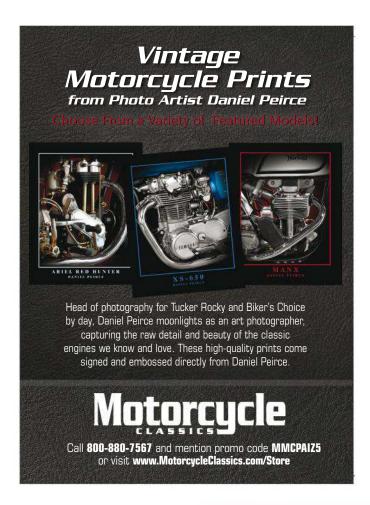
The result was like riding a 500GP 2-stroke of the era with the power valve disconnected. You had to try very hard not to let the revs drop below that power threshold, else be prepared to suffer the sudden surge of torque and a horsepower hit that would quite easily unhook the rear Michelin — especially when getting on the gas again from a closed throttle after trail-braking deep into a turn.

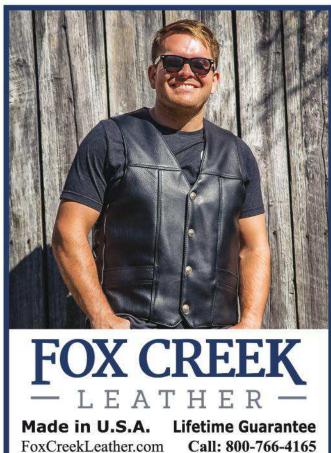
Indeed, it was the Bimota's vicious response and harsh pickup that surely caught Tardozzi out a handful of times in his World Superbike year, not only on cold tires in those pre-tire warmer days on that sighting lap in New Zealand, but most likely when he crashed at Donington at the start of the season, trying on worn tires to double-up on race wins with a last lap pass on Lucchinelli's race-leading Ducati. Several times at Rijeka, especially out of slower turns, I found myself unhook-

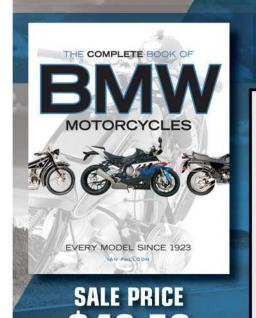
ing the rear with the Bimota's abrupt pickup on part-throttle, which on period Michelin rubber, so much less forgiving than today's Pirelli WSBK control tires, gave constant cause for concern. I was thankful Falappa had fitted his trademark wide, flat handlebars, which gave lots of leverage for correcting a slide! His unique riding style certainly suited the Bimota's explosive power delivery.

Fortunately, the Bimota chassis, fitted with then-rare Öhlins suspension, was well behaved and controllable compared to a period Japanese bike, helping harness that aggressive power delivery and allowing serious corner speed through Rijeka's fast turns. It was also pretty stable under heavy braking, where the effective Brembo front brakes really excelled in stopping a bike that was noticeably small and svelte by 4-cylinder Japanese standards, as well as far lighter. The YB4EI-R was a fast, fierce motorcycle whose explosive power delivery was only made usable by its finely honed chassis.

This snazzy-looking Italian Superbike was a highly strung, excitable Latin lovely compared to the effective but inscrutable, placid yet powerful Honda RC30 that twice beat it to the World title in the 1988 and 1989 seasons. Today's crop of 1,000cc 4-cylinder Superbikes are a blend of the two — so when Davide Tardozzi won the World Superbike Championship's debut race three decades ago in April 1988 on the Bimota, that was the moment its future began, in more ways than one.







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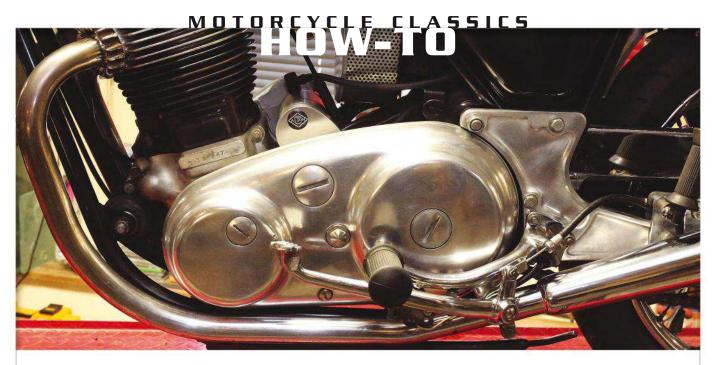
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Alton Norton Commando electric starter install

he Norton Commando is one of the most popular classic motorcycles ever made — and they made lots of them, an estimated 60,000 over an almost 10-year life span. Endowed with excellent handling and a torquey, train-pulling twin, they were the Superbike of their day.

Although electric starting was planned at least by 1970, the first electric-start Commando didn't appear until 1975, the last year of full production. That means that most Commandos, whether 750 or 850, were kickstart only. The Norton lump can be a challenge to kick over, and as the Norton faithful aged, the market for an

electric-start conversion grew. There are now several available, including the one from Alton in France (alton-france.com) that we installed in our subject 1974 Norton Commando 850 MkII.

Applicable to pre-1975 750 and 850 Commandos (except early Fastbacks with the ignition at the rear of the timing cover), the Alton kit uses the stock chain-driven primary and can be used with many belt-drive conversions.

This is a comprehensive and extremely well-designed conversion. The replacement inner primary cover carrying the small but powerful electric

starter is beautifully cast and nicely machined. The starter sprag clutch and drive setup seems very robust, and the Alton alternator, rated at a maximum output of 150 watts and 90-95 watts at cruising speed, should provide ample charging. The kit is available for either positive or negative ground systems.

You'll need a higher output battery. U.S. distributor The Classic Bike Experience in Essex, Vermont (classicbikeexperience.com), where we sourced our Alton starter, suggests an Interstate FAYTX20HL sealed lead-acid battery (pre-1971 bikes require a smaller battery; call CBE for options). We found one locally for \$85. CBE also suggests replacing the crankshaft seal. It's cheap (typically only \$2 or \$3) and easy to replace while the primary cover is off. You'll note that we did not, however, as the seal had been replaced just a few months earlier during a clutch overhaul.

The kit does not include an outer primary case locating dowel. We had to heat the stock case guite hot to break one of the dowels free, and it was a slightly loose fit in the Alton cover, requiring a dab of RTV sealant to hold it in place. New ones are cheap (about \$2.50), but this is one item we think should be included with the kit. We'd also suggest having new woodruff keys (\$7 to \$10) and a new clutch hub locking tab (about \$1) on hand. You'll need a puller for the crankshaft sprocket, a clutch hub locking tool, a clutch spring compressor (make your own; go to Motor cycleClassics.com/Norton-clutch-tool), and a torque wrench.

> On post-1971 Commandos the stock switchgear has an unused button, usually the upper right side. Legend says this was included for a proposed starter. You'll have to remove the gas tank, then locate the white/red wire coming out of the switchgear, which terminates in one of the connecting blocks on the frame. It's basically plug and play, but it's a good idea to clean the switch first. Pre-71 bikes require a separate switch.

> This is a detailed job. Give yourself a full weekend and have a Norton service manual on hand; it will help immensely during disassembly. The Alton kit comes

with a comprehensive installation guide, with photos to aid installation, and it stresses important points like properly setting the alternator stator air gap and making sure everything is absolutely correct before you attempt to start the engine the first time.

And when you do, you'll probably be as thrilled as we were. The Alton starter spins the Norton engine over easily, providing effortless, reliable starting — without kicking. As a further bonus, when you order your kit from CBE it includes a nice CBE pint glass (gotta have a beer to celebrate when you're done!) and a two-year membership to the International Norton Owners Association.

The kit retails for \$2,450. That's hardly an inconsequential sum, but if you want your Norton to start at the touch of a button, we think the Alton kit's quality design and straightforward installation with no permanent alterations make it a good value.

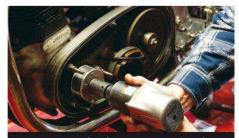


Alton's Norton Commando electric starter kit.

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Disconnect and remove the battery. Remove the left footpeg and brake pedal assembly. Place a drain pan under the primary cover. Remove the center holding bolt, then the primary cover. Use a rubber mallet to shock the cover free.



Remove the three nuts securing the alternator stator. Remove the stator. Wedge the plastic block supplied in the kit between the primary chain and the crankshaft sprocket to lock the crankshaft, then remove the rotor nut. Using flat tire irons pressed against the back side, leverage the rotor free. Remove the rotor, the woodruff key and any shims.



Remove the clutch adjusting screw, then the clutch diaphragm and clutch plates. Fold back the clutch hub nut washer tab. Lock the clutch hub and remove the clutch hub nut. An air impact wrench will remove the nut without having to lock the clutch hub.



Using a puller, break the crankshaft sprocket from its taper. Protect the crankshaft threads by placing a washer between the puller and the crankshaft stub. The sprocket can be stubborn to remove. Lightly shock the puller bolt with an air impact wrench or rap it lightly with a hammer to break it free.



Once the sprocket is released from its taper, remove the sprocket, clutch drum and chain as a set. Remove the crankshaft woodruff key. Remove the shims and the clutch locating collar on the transmission mainshaft.



Trace and disconnect alternator wires at the main harness. Pry back the tab washers on the three bolts securing the primary cover to the engine. Remove the bolts, washers and the cover.



Clean the engine case. Remove the primary cover central locating stud and fit the new Alton stud finger tight. With a straight edge against the engine case, check the distance between the straight edge and the stud's locating flat. It must be 22mm. Shim if necessary.



Install the Alton inner primary cover and lightly tighten the securing bolts with washers. There's a slim chance the new bolts could contact the crankshaft counterweight. We positioned the crankshaft and measured the distance to possible interference against the length of the bolts and found ample clearance.



Even so, with the Alton primary case in position we slowly turned the engine over to ensure the crankshaft counterweight did not contact the securing bolts. If it does, you have to shorten the securing bolts.

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Remove the primary case. Apply blue Loctite to the new central primary case stud threads and tighten it fully with the new coupling nut. Make sure the crankcase mating surface is clean and apply a film of gasket sealant. We used ThreeBond Gray.



Reinstall the Alton primary assembly. Alton suggests using Loctite on the securing bolts. We opted for Permatex Copper RTV sealant to ensure no oil migration through the threads, a somewhat common problem on Commando engines.



Install the clutch locating collar on the transmission mainshaft with the cupped side facing the transmission, followed by the shims. Turn the engine so the crankshaft sprocket keyway is at 12 o'clock and install the woodruff key.



Install the clutch drum, crankshaft sprocket and primary chain as a set. Install the clutch hub tab washer. Apply blue Loctite to the mainshaft threads, then the clutch securing nut. Lock the clutch drum and torque the nut to 40ft/lb. Fold two of the tab washer flats to lock the nut.



Install the clutch plates, clutch diaphragm and circlip. Loosely install the clutch adjusting screw and nut. Turn the engine over to bring the alternator rotor keyway slot to 12 o'clock.



1 Install the woodruff key and check the fit of the Alton sprag clutch assembly on the crankshaft. It should be a sliding fit. If not, polish the crankshaft with fine emory cloth. If it catches on the woodruff key, carefully file the key as necessary to achieve a smooth sliding fit.



Remove the sprag clutch. Remove the sprag clutch drive gear from the primary cover. Pull it straight out, then up to clear the primary chain. Remove the woodruff key, install the sprag clutch spacer stepped end out, then reinstall the woodruff key.



Install the sprag clutch, the sprag clutch drive gear and chain as a set. An extra set of hands helps to ensure the woodruff key stays in place while positioning the drive gear and pushing the sprag clutch onto the crankshaft and the drive gear into the primary case.

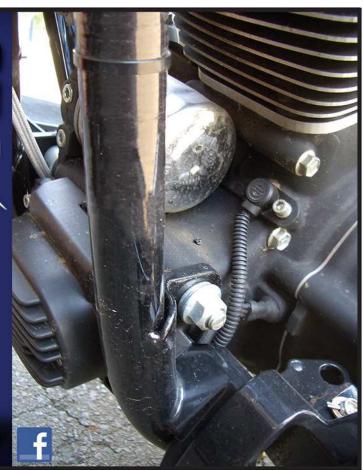


Put the rotor nut on hand tight. Position the drive gear steady plate, passing the bushed end over the end of the sprag clutch drive gear.

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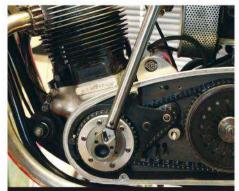


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HOW-TO



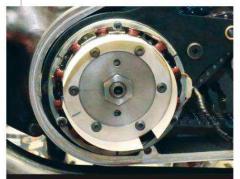
Apply blue Loctite to the central shouldered bolt and tighten lightly. Apply blue Loctite to the three steady plate screws and tighten. Tighten the shouldered bolt.



Remove the rotor nut and apply blue Loctite to the crankshaft threads. Lock the crankshaft using the supplied plastic block and tighten the rotor nut to 60ft/lb.



Install the alternator stator. Fit two of the three screws loosely. Insert the supplied plastic shims between the windings and the rotor to set the air gap. If necessary, adjust the air gap by moving the stator sideways. Once set, tighten the two screws, then install and tighten the third screw.



Ensure the air gap clearance is consistent. We marked the rotor face with a black felt pen and checked the air gap every 120 degrees of engine rotation. Connect the stator wires to the two wires in the primary case. It doesn't matter which goes where.



Connect the alternator wires to the factory harness. It doesn't matter which goes where. Locate the factory white/red starter switch wire and connect it to the supplied jumper wire.



Install the battery and the starter relay. Connect the starter switch jumper wire to the spade connector off the relay. Bolt the relay ground wire to the frame. Connect the starter motor cable and the relay to the battery cable. Connect the negative and positive battery cables.



Install the new primary case rubber seal (trim as needed) with the joint at the top. Remove a locating dowel from the original primary case and install it in the Alton. Ours was a loose fit. We secured it with RTV sealant.



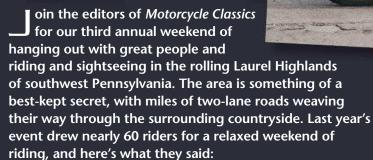
Adjust the free play in the clutch and lock the adjusting screw nut. If it won't adjust properly, remove the inspection cover above the kickstarter for the clutch operating lever and confirm the lever is in place. If it has slipped out of place, loosen the clutch adjusting screw, put the lever in place and readjust the clutch free play.



Install the outer cover and add 200cc of 20w/50 motorcycle oil or ATF. Avoid most automotive oils as they are loaded with friction modifiers. Test the starter with plugs out. Install the plugs, test again, then start up and enjoy!

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We'll roll down miles of fantastic backcountry road through some of the most beautiful farmland in the country, an area punctuated by stunning Amish farms. All packages include lodging, a welcome reception, a post-ride homecoming dinner, and breakfast at the resort's Slopeside restaurant. Secure indoor motorcycle storage is also included.

Motorcycle

AUGUST 10-12, 2018 SEVEN SPRINGS MOUNTAIN RESORT SEVEN SPRINGS, PA

A limited selection of classic 1970s motorcycles – including models from Ducati, Triumph, Norton, Yamaha, BMW, and more – will be available from Retro Tours as an added option – first come, first served!

Bonhams









For updates and more information visit www.MotorcycleClassics.com/RideEvent Reservations can be made through Seven Springs Mountain Resort: https://goo.gl/dqFv18 or call 1-800-880-7567

"It's possible that over the years there has been some mismatching of parts."

No spark

I just bought a 1972 Husqvarna 250 WR. It has been sitting in a heated basement since 1975. It was never raced and is all original. It even still has the original tires. What it doesn't have is spark. I got a flywheel puller, but I have not removed the flywheel yet. Using a multimeter, I'm getting a reading of 4.32 ohms on the original coil. I'm not sure how to test the stator or if that is the correct next step?

Randy Kuser/via email

A: It sounds to me like the coil is fine, so next I would rotate the flywheel until I could see the points through one of the flywheel slots. They're bound to be corroded from sitting and may not be conducting properly. You can take a thin piece of card stock like a business card and pull it through the points to clean them a little bit. Spray a little contact cleaner on the points and switch to a clean strip of card stock and repeat until the card is clean. You may find you now have spark.

Boyer ignition troubles

I recently purchased a classic Triumph Trident with wiring problems. The biggest problem at the moment is that the Boyer ignition doesn't compute to hook the coils in series. When tested, there is a voltage drop until near nothing on the last coil. Do I have coil problems? The other problem is the flasher that is hot all the time, the left turn signal works but not the right.

Gene McKillips/via email

I agree, at first glance wiring coils in series just looks wrong. The difference between points ignition and electronic ignition on the Trident is that the three sets of points fire each coil in sequence, while most electronic ignitions fire all the coils simultaneously. That's called wasted spark ignition, since in the case of the Trident only one cylinder will be on the compression stroke while the rest are on some degree of exhaust stroke. If you are still using the original coils, the problem with wiring all the coils in series is the voltage drop becomes a problem; the coils don't fire properly or at all. Where you once had three 12-volt



Ready to take your classic queries: Old-bike mechanic Keith Fellenstein.

coils, each wired separately, now you need — ideally — three 4-volt coils wired serially in order for each coil to receive enough voltage to fire properly. The Boyer instructions call for using 6-volt coils. If you make that switch you should be OK. I have to say that of all the bikes I own, an electronic ignition makes the most sense on my Trident. As to your left signal problem, grounding those old Lucas stalks is a common problem. The originals back in the day had a ground wire running from the socket to the metal pipe connecting them to the bike frame. Modern copies rely on the chrome plating on the plastic to ground the socket. As you might imagine, this fails over time due to corrosion and flaking chrome on the plastic.

Commando clutch setup

I have a beautiful 1975 Norton Mark **!** III Commando that is nearly unrideable due to a clutch/shifter issue that my local vintage mechanic has been unsuccessful at fixing. The clutch does not fully disengage when you pull in the clutch lever. The 1 to 2, and 2 to 3 upshifts are very hard, particularly when the bike is warmed up. Downshifting is worse, as pulling in the clutch to downshift does not fully release the clutch (i.e., even with the clutch lever pulled in, the transmission engages immediately when you shift down). Sometimes on a 4 to 3 or 3 to 2 downshift it hits what seems to be a false neutral, but sometimes blipping the throttle gets a gear to engage from the false neutral. To stop this quirky Commando I need to pull in the clutch

lever, apply the brakes, and blip the throttle to "break" the clutch loose. Otherwise I'm "power-braking," which is of course not ideal. Unfortunately, I lack the skills to troubleshoot and solve the problem.

Christopher Belling/New York

The Norton Commando clutch is usually pretty easy to set right, but there are a few things to check. First among them is the stack height, the total thickness of all the plain plates, friction plates and pressure plate. For your 1975 model the height should be close to 1.027 inches. If the height isn't correct, you'll notice it with either a dragging clutch like you describe or a difficult pull at the

clutch lever. It's possible that over the vears there has been some mismatching of parts between a 750 and 850 clutch. The diaphragm spring and clutch basket are the same across the models, but the number and thicknesses of the plain and friction plates is different. For the 850 the friction plates should be 0.121 inches thick and the plain plates should be 0.080 inches thick, with the pressure plate being 0.102 inches thick. The 850 has five friction plates and four plain plates, while the 750 has four and three, respectively. Another common problem is a notched basket or clutch hub. This will tend to keep the plates in contact with each other even when the clutch is pulled in. To complicate things further, the plates can build up oil residue and stick to each other. On the right side of the bike, you should open the inspection cover of the gearbox to make sure of two things. One, that the clutch release lock ring is in all the way and tight, and two, that the cable to the clutch rod actuation lever hasn't fallen out of position. It can fall down when the clutch pack and rod is removed. To make a long story boring, I think you'll need to tear down the clutch and check everything to see what's out of spec. To learn more about the Commando clutch and how to replace it, check out MotorcycleClassics.com/ commando-clutch

Email questions to keithsgarage@ motorcycleclassics.com





Schuberth C4 flip-up helmet and MotoBailey street boots

Safe travels: Schuberth C4

I've never been a fan of modular helmets. I've tried a few over the years, and while I appreciate the convenience of a flip-up for interacting with toll booth operators and in situations where it's nice to converse easily without having to remove your lid, the downside of the attending bulk pushed them out of first choice consideration.

Back in 2012, I sampled the then-new Schuberth S2, at the time the lightest flip-up on the market. Nicely styled, it was an excellent lid. And while it was relatively light at around 3 pounds, 12-3/8 ounces, it was still too bulky for my tastes. I tried again a few years later when Nolan introduced the N104 Evo, which, while lighter yet at 3 pounds, 10 ounces, felt even bulkier. That kind of settled the issue for me and I stuck to my Arai Signet-Q. It's noisy, but it's reasonably light (3 pounds, 9-5/8 ounces), moves huge quantities of air when you need it to, and its quality speaks for itself.

So when Schuberth asked if I was interested in trying out its new C4 I was a little places for a safe, secure fit. And it looks unlike any modular I've tried before: less bulky, sportier and more aerodynamic. That last point is important, because

the C4's wind-tunnel derived shape delivers one of the quietest helmets I've ever worn, and one of the most comfortable thanks to minimal lift and buffeting. The quick-release chin strap is nicely padded and easy to use, and the face shield has a Pinlock anti-fog lens, a must-have on any helmet in my book. Peripheral vision is excellent, and the integrated dropdown sun shield is unobtrusive and works well. The C4 comes pre-equipped with a built-in microphone and speakers, and an optional communication system plugs into the back of the helmet, completely

Exceptionally comfortable and quiet. the new C4 has changed how I think about modular helmets. ECE 22.05 certified and tested as a full-face helmet, it comes with a five-year warranty. Full review at MotorcycleClassics.com/C4-review. \$699-\$799 depending on color. More info: schuberth.com/us — Richard Backus

integrated into the shell.



see what sort of advancements have been made, but I was pretty certain it wouldn't deliver the mix of performance and utility I look for. Wow, how wrong you can be.

Billed as the lightest modular on the market, the C4 I got weighs in at 4 pounds even. That makes it heavier than the S2, but it's a much nicer lid. Unlike any modular I've tried before, the C4 fits like the proverbial glove; snug in all the right

Riding boots with street cred

MotoBailey is a relative newcomer to the world of motorcycle apparel, but their stylish, motorcycle-dedicated riding boots are generating attention for the Texas-based company. And while not the first in a growing category of retro-inspired motorcycle street boots, they might just be the best looking.

The brainchild of husband and wife team — and avid motor-

cyclists — Blake and Jennifer Bailey, MotoBailey boots are designed to provide protection and durability in a style befitting non-motorcycle moments like work and eating out.

Rising just above the ankle, the cut of the LaRvder boots I tried reminds me of the classic Clarks Desert Boots I used to wear, and the French leather, dyed a rich brown, is beautiful.

Importantly, there's a lot more to MotoBailey boots than just good looks, because these really are boots made for riding. An extra leather wrap over both toes provides a shift pad whether your ride is old school European or new school Japanese. Boosting their protective capacity, they feature extra ankle protection and a heel cap sewn under their biggest safety feature, a Kevlar lining running around the entire boot.

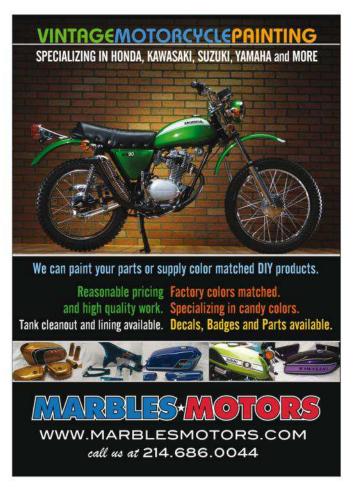
Just as important, they're also comfortable. I wore mine around the office for a week to break them in, and as the leather flexed and stretched they transitioned from stiff to comfy. On the bike, they're everything you'd expect out of a good boot, and they definitely fulfill their mission; a safe, solid, good-looking

riding boot you can wear to work

or to the pub without feeling like ATGATT man. Every person who sees them says something to the effect of, "Wow, those are awesome-looking shoes!"

That they are, and I won't be surprised if they become one of my favorite pieces of urban riding

gear. Also available is the similarly styled but darker and more formal-looking ElBulli. Full review at MotorcycleClassics.com/LaRyder. \$220. More info: moto bailey.com — Richard Backus





Motorcycle

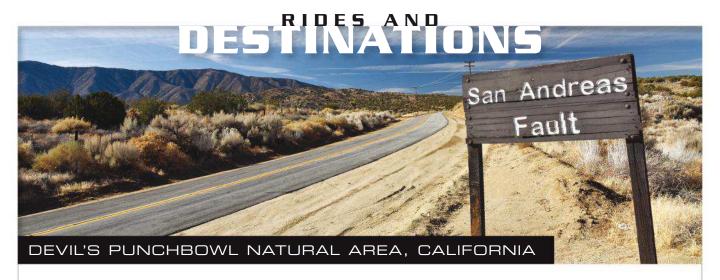
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reat riding, great scenery, amazing roads, and an up-close-andpersonal peek at California's most famous fault, the San Andreas, make for a magnificent ride to a delightful destination: The Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area. Nestled in the northern slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains, the Devil's Punchbowl is a quick 1 hour and 15 minutes' drive north of Los Angeles if you take the express route, but that would be missing the point entirely. A far better approach is to take the day and combine a visit to this geological gem with a circumnavigation of the San Gabriel Mountains.

This is an awesome ride that can originate anywhere around the periphery of the San Gabriels, a southern California mountain range minted with motorcycling in mind. The San Gabriels run east to west, with the western edge starting 20 miles north of Los Angeles and running 70 miles east to the Cajon Pass, separating the Mojave Desert from the San Gabriel and Pomona valleys.

Our ride for this Destinations piece

started in Azusa (everything from A to Z in the USA, as they say), situated roughly midway between the eastern and western edges of the San Gabriels. SoCal freeways (the 210 and the 15) provided the route through the region's southern suburbs; the Nirvana-like northern segment through the San Gabriels' scenic twisties is far more interesting. That's where the fun begins, with a delightful climb into Wrightwood, a short sprint on the worldfamous Angeles Crest Highway to the Grizzly Café (breakfast is always better on a mountain motorcycle ride), and then a right onto the appropriately named Big Pines Highway. Awesome riding, magnificent roads, crisp pine-scented mountain air, and the vistas, with the Mojave Desert on the right and San Gabriel summits on the left, are stunning.

Riding west along the northern edges of the San Gabriels (and after passing through Valyermo and its desperately photogenic post office), watch for the Devil's Punchbowl signs. The Devil's Punchbowl is a 1,300-acre Los Angeles County park we discovered on a previous ride, and it may be one of SoCal's best kept secrets. The Punchbowl is a 300-foot-deep ragged and rugged canyon punctuated by sheer vertical rocky slabs, a geological gem formed by a misbehaving San Andreas fault millions of years ago. There's no entrance fee, there's no parking fee, and there's a nature center with rattlesnakes and a very photogenic owl named Squinty. If you're up for it, you can hike the 1 mile into the Punchbowl and back.

To continue the San Gabriel circumnavigation after leaving Devil's Punchbowl, ride west through the sandy desert foothills to Fort Tejon Road. Turn left to ride Fort Tejon across the San Andreas fault (watch the soft sandy shoulders when you stop for a photo). Then it's Mt. Emma Road south to round the San Gabriels' western edge and a climb back into the mountains.

Mt. Emma Road ends at the Angeles Forest Highway, another great SoCal motorcycling treat. Hang a left, enjoy the road, and you'll run right into the Angeles Crest Highway (see MC's September/ October 2007 issue). Turn right for 10 miles of glorious twisties on one of the world's arguably most famous moto roads. That will drop you onto California Highway 210, and from there, you can return to your starting point. — Joe Berk

What: Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area, 28000 Devil's Punchbowl Rd., Pearblossom, CA, 93553, (661) 944-2743, and a circumnavigation of the San Gabriel Mountains. How to Get There: From the south, pick up SR 210 east, slab it to I-15 north, climb through the Cajon Pass (watch the winds; they can tip tractor trailers), make a quick left on SR 138 (Angeles Crest Highway), and pick up Lone Pine

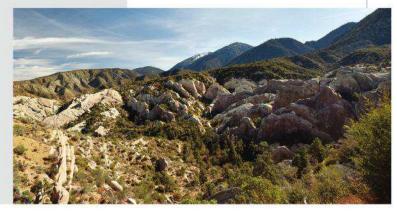
Canyon Road. From there, follow the directions outlined above.

Best Kept Secret: The Devil's Punchbowl itself. It's tucked away in the San Gabriels' northern slopes and few people know about it. Try the Grizzly Café's French toast in Wrightwood; you can thank me later.

Avoid: Speeding on the Angeles Crest Highway (it's heavily patrolled). Don't use a navigation program; it will tell you the most direct route to the Devil's Punchbowl, and what would be the fun in that?

More Photos: californiascooterco.com/blog/?p=27992 and californiascooterco.com/blog/?p=27841

More Info: http://parks.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dpr/Parks/ Devils_Punchbowl_Natural_Area





MAY/JUNE 2018

Don't miss these upcoming events!

5/5 Attend the 10th Annual The Quail Motorcycle Gathering at The Quail Lodge in Carmel, California. This year's show will feature café racers, electric motorcycles and the Arlen Ness Private Collection, plus 10 more categories. The \$75 ticket includes a barbecue lunch. On the web at signatureevents.peninsula.com

Head to the 50th Annual Hanford Vintage Motorcycle rally at the Kings Fairgrounds in Hanford, California, which will feature an antique and classic motorcycle show, more than 150 vendors, a parts exchange and sale corral, RV hookups, food and more. On the web at classiccycleevents.com



The Motorcycle Classics Editor's Choice award at the 2017 Rockerbox show went to Gary King for his spectacular Jamie James Yamaha RZ350.

6/2 Visit the Friends of Steve McQueen car and motorcycle show in support of Boys Republic, a private, nonprofit school dedicated to troubled teens, in Chino Hills, California. This year's theme is the movie Bullitt and the 50th anniversary of the classic film. On the web at stevemcqueencarshow.com

Attend the Vintage MotoFest featuring AHRMA Vintage Racing and Rockerbox, in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, June 8-10. Enjoy a ride-in bike show on Saturday, vendors, AHRMA racing all weekend and more. Join the Sunset Cruise on the famed track Saturday. On the web at roadamerica.com

19 Legendary flat track racers bin well.

Parker will be the Grand Marshals for the 19th Annual Riding into History Motorcycle Concours at the World Golf Village near St. Augustine, Florida. RIH begins on Friday, May 18, with a lunch ride and the Grand Marshal's Dinner, followed on Saturday by the Concours d'Elegance, featuring "A Fast Blast from the Past" honoring competition motorcycles for 2018. On the web at ridingintohistory.org

Visit the 8th Annual Village Raily at Motorcycle Museum in Anamosa, Iowa. Enter your Visit the 8th Annual Vintage Rally at the National 1988 or older motorcycle or bicycle in the Vintage Bike Show. On the web at nationalmcmuseum.org

Come join us at the Motoblot Ride-In Motorcycle and Hot Rod Show in downtown Chicago, Saturday, June 23, from noon to 5 p.m. Awards will be given in six vintage categories, plus another 10 modern and custom categories. On the web at motoblot.com

Motorcycle Classics wants to know about classic motorcycle shows, swap meets, road runs and more. Send details of upcoming events at least three months in advance to Ihall@motorcycleclassics.com

May 5 — 12th Annual Carolina Classic Motorcycle Show. Spencer, NC. nctrans.org

May 18-19 — 9th Annual AMCA Southern National Meet. Denton, NC. amcasouthernnationalmeet.com

May 19 — KCVIMC 8th Annual Spring Show at Donnell's Motorcycles. Independence, MO. kcvjmc.com

May 19-20 — OVM May Ride, Show and Swap Meet. Corvallis, OR. oregonvintage.org

May 20 — 17th Annual British & European Classic Motorcycle Day. Clarksburg, MD. classicmotorcycleday.org

May 20 — 9th Annual Antique Motorcycle Swap Meet and Show. Centreville, MI. wolverineamca.com

May 21 — USCRA U.S. Vintage GP. New Hampshire Motor Speedway. Loudon, NH. race-uscra.com

June 2 — Cars and Motorcycles of England. Hope Lodge, Ft. Washington, PA. dvtr.org

June 2-3 — Ohio Valley BSA Owners Club Spring Classic. Toronto, OH. ohiovalleybsaownersclub.com

June 4-9 — 36th Annual Americade. Lake George, NY. americade.com

June 9-10 — USCRA FIM North American Vintage Road Racing Championships. New Hampshire Motor Speedway. Loudon, NH. race-uscra.com

June 9-11 — Lake Erie Loop. Wellington, OH. lakeerieloop.com

June 10 — 40th Annual BSAOCNE British Motorcycle Meet. Lancaster, MA. bsaocne.org

June 15-16 — Fort Sutter AMCA National Motorcycle Show and Swap Meet. Dixon, CA. fortsutteramca.org

June 15-17 — 46th Annual Canadian Vintage Motorcycle Group Paris National Rally. Paris, Ontario, Canada. cvmg.ca

June 16-17 — AMCA Viking Chapter Annual Meet. St. Paul, MN. vikingmc.org

June 21-24 — 2018 VIMC National Rally. Mitchell, IN.

June 22-23 — GABMA 33rd Annual British in the Blue Ridge Rally and Bike Show. Hiawassee, GA. gabma.us

June 22-24 — 25th Annual Triumph National Rally. Oley, PA. triumphnationalrally.com

June 23-24 — 23rd Annual CJMC Classic Japanese Motorcycle Swap & Show. Dixon, CA. cjmc.org



Circle #5; see card pg 81



Circle #4; see card pg 81







New Stuff for Old Bikes

From Honda CB350 rear wheels to 2-stroke crankshaft rebuilding, here are six cool products every classic bike fan should know about.



A better cable lube tool

Motion Pro has introduced a new cable lubing tool. Most cable lube tools slip around the cable and are then clamped shut to make a seal, with spray lube fed through a small hole via the spray wand. They work OK, but they're also pretty messy as they don't usually seal well, particularly after lots of use. The Cable Luber V3 seals completely around the cable and housing and over spinning end fittings for a superior seal and less mess, which also means less wasted lube. \$19.99. More info: motionpro.com



Busted Knuckle Toolbox

OK, so Busted Knuckle Garage is known more for cars than bikes, but we think the Busted Knuckle Garage Vintage Motorcycle Mechanic Toolbox is pretty cool. Featuring all-steel construction, the 16-inch toolbox is powder coated for durability, and the nickel-plated steel latch and hinge mean you don't have to worry about it springing open when you toss it into the back of the race van. \$49.95. More info: bustedknucklegarage.com



Honda CB750 shocks

Vintage motorcycle parts supplier EMGO has announced new replacement shock absorbers for vintage Honda CB750s. Bolt-on replacements for the originals, the EMGO shocks are available with the upper shroud as used on 1969-1976 CB750s or unshrouded as used on 1977-1978 CB750s. Faithful reproductions of the originals, they're also better in every way with superior damping and rebound control. Suggested retail: \$123.75 (unshrouded)/\$132.30 (shrouded). More info: emgo.com



DCC Honda CB350 rear wheels

With extensive experience developing their own AHRMA Honda CB350 race bike, Dime City Cycles knows a thing or two about CB350s. They have a huge inventory of parts for the 350, including complete, ready-to-mount 18-inch rear wheels. The DCC wheels feature new stainless steel spokes, a new rim, and new brake shoes mounted to a reconditioned, custom drilled OEM hub with new wheel bearings and seals. Black powder coat or polished finish (shown). \$879.95. More info: dimecitycycles.com



Spectro motorcycle wash

Most of us know Spectro Oils for their excellent 2- and 4-stroke motorcycle oils, but the Connecticut-based company has an extensive line of other products including but not limited to chain lubes, air filter cleaner and oil, brake fluid, assembly lube, spray polish, and their premium Motorcycle Wash, which Spectro says contains no petroleum solvents or harsh chemicals. Waterbased and non-flammable, it will not spot-blanch metals if thoroughly rinsed. It worked great in our trial, including cleaning a dirty Laverda engine. \$12.99. More info: spectro-oils.com



2-stroke crankshaft services

Two-stroke specialists Roy's Rides now offers complete 2-stroke crankshaft rebuilding services along with complete 2-stroke motorcycle rebuilding, with an eye toward creating refurbished, oneof-a kind riders. Although mechanically simple, 2-stroke engines suffer over time from deteriorated crankshaft seals, which cause lean running and other issues that can lead to complete engine failure. Fewer and fewer shops are offering 2-stroke crankshaft rebuilding services, which is why Roy's Rides started offering the service. Prices vary depending upon make and number of cylinders. More info: roysrides.com







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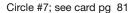
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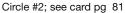
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Circle #1; see card pg 81

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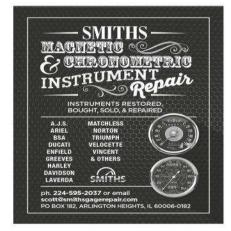
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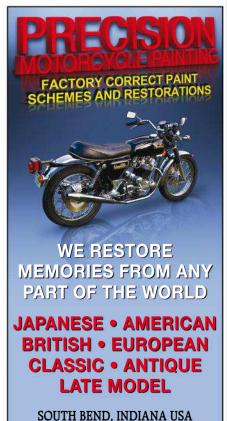
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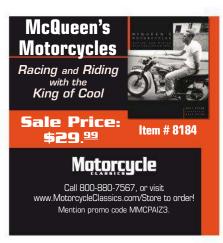




















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But don't forget about the '70s! Many great and classic motorcycles were designed and built in the '70s, and **Motorcycle Classics** has put together a 100-page special edition featuring articles that explore the decade and what it brought to the motorcycle world. The Honda GL1000 Gold Wing, Triumph X75 Hurricane, BMW R90s, Suzuki GS1000, along with many others are all covered in this glossy-page, full-color guide.

Motorcycle

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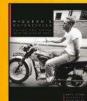
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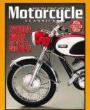
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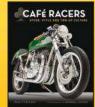
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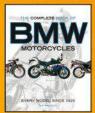


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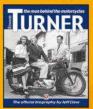
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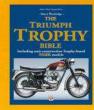
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The Triumph Trophy Bible

This is the complete year-by-year history of the Trophy (and unit construction Tiger) twins from 1949 to 1983. It includes original factory model photos, technical specifications, color schemes, engine and frame numbers, model type identification, and details of Trophy and Tiger achievements. As a longtime employee at Triumph's Meridian factory, Harry Woodridge shares his knowledge and expertise to provide the complete source book for Triumph Trophy owners and enthusiasts.

#8058 \$60.00



Classic British Motorcycles

n the modern era, mass-produced motorcycles tend to be Japanese or Italian, with the "big four" Asian manufacturers dominating the market. However, until the 1950s, and even into the '60s, British makers such as Norton and Vincent ruled the roost. These legendary companies, and many smaller British firms, are motorcycling's founding companies. Superbly illustrated with more than 150 color pictures, many previously unpublished, this book is a captivating and highly informative account of the men, machines, race meetings, and world events that shaped the development of the motorcycle from its bicycle origins.

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The Build: How the Masters Design Custom Motorcycles

In The Build, Robert Hoekman Jr. compiles insights from today's best builders to help you plot out your own beautiful beast. This book is as much a 192-page motorcycle art book as it is a blueprint to building the perfect custom bike. The book is the bible of custom motorcycle design, starting with an explanation of all the different bike styles, and then moving into a concise, easy-to-read guide that takes you from finding a donor bike to figuring out how to alter the lines to your liking. The book also covers selecting and building parts, painting and finishing, and what kind of performance modifications might be appropriate.

#8053 \$45.00

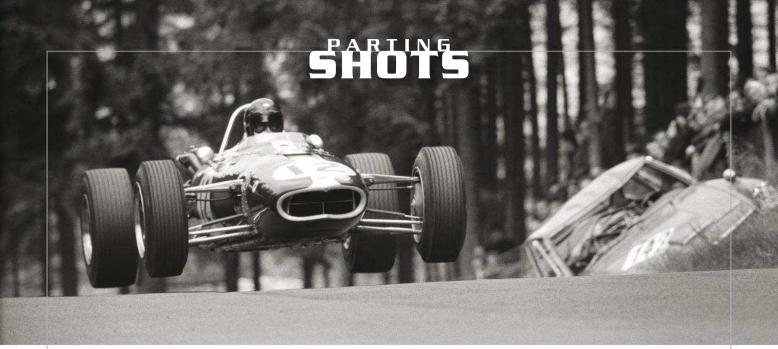
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Dan Gurney getting some air in the Eagle Gurney-Weslake V12 at Nürburgring, 1967. Courtesy Rainer Schlegelmilch/AAR Archives.

Dan Gurney, 1931-2018: An American Hero

merican heroes aren't supposed to die, but they do. Like many race fans from my generation, my American hero was Dan Gurney, one of America's greatest race car drivers of all time. He passed away Jan. 14, at the age of 86.

Gurney's high-water mark occurred in a single week in 1967 when, after teaming with A.J. Foyt in Ford's Mk IV to win the LeMans 24-hour endurance race, Gurney piloted his Eagle Gurney-Weslake to victory at the Belgium Grand Prix. After he retired as a driver, Gurney's Eagle race cars won several Indianapolis 500s, and his All American Racers team accounted for numerous other championships, as well.

Gurney was also a bike guy, and he loved riding. In their early 20s, Gurney and his best friend, Skip Hudson, rode their motorcycles over the freshly graded dirt that became Riverside International Raceway in 1957. In coming years, Gurney won countless races there and it became known as his home track.

In 1959, almost on a whim, Gurney entered the Big Bear Run, a grueling enduro where he and his Triumph TR6 finished

21st out of 872 entries. That same year Ferrari hired him to race in Formula 1. Yet Gurney took pride in that single Big Bear outing, touting it as one of his "major accomplishments."

His reach into the motorcycle community grew when he signed Yamaha to sponsor his Lotus-Ford entry the Yamaha Special — for the 1965 Indianapolis 500. Buoyed by his success in auto racing, Gurney partnered with Kim Kimball and actor Steve McQueen as U.S. distributors for Montesa motorcycles. He appeared in several Montesa advertisements, and in 1971 his notoriety helped raise funds for a group of aspiring young American motocross racers in Europe. Gurney also sponsored AMA Expert racer Chuck Palmgren's flat track racing program, and they worked together developing the Alligator motorcycle concept that

championed a chassis design to lower a bike's center of gravity for improved handling.

Gurney was an innovator. In 1968, he was the first race car driver to wear Bell Helmets' new Bell Star full-coverage helmet, favored by motorcycle racers that same year. His race teams helped pioneer exotic materials such as titanium and carbon fiber to reduce weight, and the "Gurney Flap" concept is still used today on most race cars to improve aerodynamics.

Gurney was also responsible for a lasting moto-journalism career by a young and rather impressionable college student - me. I first met Gurney at Orange County International Raceway's Turn 9, where I boldly introduced myself to the American hero while he was spectating at a local motorcycle club race. I was there to complete a photo assignment for a journalism class, and during our talk Gurney inquired about the camera dangling precipitously from my neck. I explained my situation, but quickly recovered to say that I actually wanted to be a race car driver.

Looking back, I realize my naivety, but Gurney showed no reaction to my whimsical behavior. He said simply: "You know, our sport could use a few good journalists, too." His exact words, and though they seemed trite and meaningless — after all, I was going to be America's next F1 star — they etched themselves in my mind. I won my first car race (fittingly, at Riverside), but then racing became one spinout after another until my checkbook ended up in the marbles. Down but not defeated, I retreated to motorcycle racing, where I once again enjoyed life's pleasures. A few years later I committed myself to journalism, and throughout my career I have often recalled Gurney's words to me during that cool autumn day at Turn 9. Looking back, I wouldn't change a thing. That's the sort of impact American heroes have on us. — Dain Gingerelli



Team Montesa: Dan Gurney partnered with the U.S. Montesa distributors in the late 1960s. Photo courtesy AAR Archives.

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